

# Guidelines of Faith

*by*  
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Nichiren Shoshu International Center

First Edition, 1980  
Seventh Printing, 1985

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Published by Nichiren Shoshu International Center  
1-33-11 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 151

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 80-151208

ISBN4-88872-002-9 C0015

Printed in Japan

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## Foreword

“PROFESSIONAL encourager”—members call Mr. Satoru Izumi, a vice president of the Soka Gakkai and general director of the Nichiren Shoshu International Center. Wherever he goes at home and abroad, we find many people standing up and growing in faith through his encouragement. Since the early days of the Soka Gakkai, Mr. Izumi has devoted himself fully to giving guidance and encouragement to individual members, particularly troubled people. He has led most of them to happiness and prosperity by pointing out the correct way of faith and practice.

Born in 1911, Mr. Izumi graduated from the present Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. In 1940, he became a member of the Soka Gakkai (Value-Creating Society), a lay organization of Nichiren Shoshu. He is one of the pioneers who have helped build the Soka Gakkai we see today under the guidance of four successive presidents—Mr. Makiguchi, Mr. Toda, Mr. Ikeda and Mr. Hōjō. This organization now has a membership of well over ten million, with sister organizations in more than fifty countries.

*Guidelines of Faith* is a volume of collected guidance and encouragement Mr. Izumi has given on various occasions, formally and informally. It was originally published under the title *Shidō no Izumi* (Wellspring of Guidance) by the Seikyo Press, Tokyo, in February 1979. An English translation was serialized in the monthly *Seikyo Times* from April 1979 through July 1980. This book is a revised version of the *Seikyo Times* translation.

The reader will understand that much of Mr. Izumi's guidance is based on a Japanese frame of reference and patterns of thinking. A few parts, such as a section on "arranged marriage," were omitted, being irrelevant to Western readers. However, the basic points he makes speak to universal needs and most of the contents will be applicable to situations which believers of any country face in their everyday practice. This book will offer readers a key to solving their problems and bringing forth the power of the Buddha inherent within themselves. In his guidance, Mr. Izumi seeks to awaken people to what faith should be and enable them to establish true independence on the basis of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. We hope readers will use this book as their "guidelines of faith" and elevate their life-condition through correct practice.

October 1980

*Nichiren Shoshu International Center  
Editorial Department*

## Preface

I TOOK faith in Nichiren Shoshu when I was twenty-nine. At that time I was in the depths of misery. I used to think there was probably nobody in the world more unhappy than I. However, in meeting the Gohonzon, I was able to turn adversity into happiness, just like poison changed into medicine.

My mother died when I was three. My grandparents were then still relatively young. Since my father had been adopted as a husband for their daughter and was living with them, they feared that if he took a second wife, it might create discord in the family. Therefore, they decided to make me their heir. From that time on I was raised by my grandparents.

My grandfather was a very good-natured man. He had acted as guarantor for some of his friends, and when he died he left behind a huge debt. All of the family property changed hands. I was only twenty years old then.

I resented everyone and everything in the world. Why did I have to suffer such misfortune? People said that good deeds are rewarded and evil deeds are pun-

ished, but I couldn't believe it. My grandfather had lived honestly and worked hard since his youth. For generations my family had served as chief parishioners, both for the Buddhist temple and the Shinto shrine in the village. My grandfather, too, had done everything he could for the temple, for the shrine, the village, the school and so on. All this had only led to the ruin of the family.

There were no gods and no Buddhas either, I thought. Every Buddhist or Shinto priest I met said that his was the best religion in the world. To me they all seemed to be seeking only their own interests. How else could there be so many "best" religions? I gradually came to believe that the only thing I could rely on in this life was my own effort. I was later to learn that this itself was an erroneous conclusion, a reaction to the false religions of my family, but I had no way of knowing it at the time. "From today on," I told myself, "I'll save money every day, no matter how little, and depend on no one but myself." Thus I entered a new period in life.

I married, and our first child—a boy—was born. I was overjoyed, but my joy was short-lived, for our son died four days later. Earlier I had lost my mother, and now I had lost my child. Why so much misery? I kept asking myself this question. Then the following year, my wife fell ill and had to be hospitalized. There went all my hard-earned money.

My misfortunes would not cease. Our first daughter, who was born in the year that followed, turned out to have cerebral palsy. "I'm sorry, Mr. Izumi," the doctor said, "but there is no way to cure your child." I think

nothing can be more agonizing to parents than to have a sick child who goes on living, without the slightest hope of being cured.

If you are unhappy with your spouse, you can get a divorce, but you can't divorce your child, no matter how much distress that child may cause you. "Even if my daughter lives, she'll never be healthy enough to take care of herself," I would think to myself. "For her own sake, she might be better off dead. Perhaps I should take her life with my own hand, but how can a parent do such a thing?" I acutely realized what grief and anguish it is for parents to have an ailing child.

Up until then I had looked at life with an attitude of "What will be, will be." For instance, if I lost a hundred yen, I would comfort myself, saying, "Lucky it wasn't a thousand yen." Again, if I lost a thousand yen, I would find solace in the fact that it hadn't been ten thousand. Thus, whenever misery struck me, I would compare it with some other, greater, misfortune and say to myself, "Cheer up! It could have been worse."

So, when a friend of mine spoke to me about Nichiren Shoshu, I at first thought, "I don't need any religion. True, my mother died, all the family property was taken, and I lost my son. However, these are all events of the past, things which couldn't have been helped. Religion is of no use to me."

However, my palsy-stricken daughter changed my way of thinking. I could no longer say, "What will be, will be," or "Don't bother. Let things go their own way." I had a child with a disease which the doctor had pronounced incurable. I would try everything—any-

thing—which people suggested might help, I decided. Then, even if my daughter were to die, I could say to her, “I’ve done everything a parent could. I’ve made sure you had all the medical care available, I’ve tried whatever people said might help for your illness. There is nothing more I can do for you. Please resign yourself to your fate.”

My friend kept coming and talking to me about Nichiren Shoshu. He got me to thinking. What if I rejected that religion and my daughter died? Wouldn’t I regret it for the rest of my life, thinking, “I wish I had taken faith in it. She might have been cured”? I must be free of any regret when I die. All right, I decided, I would take faith in Nichiren Shoshu for the sake of my poor child.

Nichiren Shoshu is the true Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin. At first I had no idea why it was “true,” but I didn’t care as long as it was powerful enough to cure my child’s illness. Now, as I look back, I realize that had it not been for my paralyzed daughter, I would not be what I am today. To me she was what Buddhism terms a *zenchishiki* or good influence.

The direct cause for my conversion was my ailing daughter. Viewed from a broader perspective, however, there were other factors, too. My mother died when I was three. When I was twenty, my grandfather died, leaving a huge debt. All our property changed hands. My son died four days after birth. Then my daughter was born, handicapped by an incurable disease. All these misfortunes, I think, combined to make me take faith in true Buddhism. I’m convinced that all of them—my

mother, my grandfather, my son, my daughter—appeared in this world in order to lead me to the Gohonzon.

As long as you maintain an indestructible faith, you will never fail to transform adversity into happiness, just like poison changed into medicine. I was in the depths of misery when I took faith in the Gohonzon. Since then I have continued to struggle along the path of faith, abiding by my seniors’ guidance, gritting my teeth in the face of many hardships. Now I find myself progressing slowly but steadily each day, filled with boundless gratitude for the Gohonzon.

No matter what occurs, you should continue to chant daimoku and propagate our faith. Then you can elevate your life-condition and overcome unhappiness. This is what it means to surmount difficulties through your faith and overcome your own weakness. This is what will lead to a harmonious family. The time will certainly come when you will be able to say with gratitude, “Because we have maintained our faith in the Gohonzon, we are now immeasurably happy.”

In this book, the NSIC Editorial Department staff have translated and edited my guidance about faith and practice based on my own forty years’ experience in the Soka Gakkai. I sincerely hope it will help you to deepen your faith and thus receive even greater benefit from the Gohonzon. I would also like to express my appreciation to the staff of the NSIC Editorial Department for their efforts.

## CHAPTER I

### Some Basic Guidelines

### Proper Attitude

I'VE been to various parts of the world. No matter which country I visit, the people express the same wish: "I want to be happy." This is a desire common to people all over the globe. However, when it comes to Buddhism—the religion which can fulfill that desire—many of them complain that not enough study material is translated, or that it is difficult to grasp.

I always reply to them: "The only language I speak is Japanese. I don't know how to say 'sugar' in German or French, but I've discovered that sugar in any country is sweet. I didn't have to learn how to say it in this language or that in order to discover its sweetness. Whether or not you understand the language, it is an indisputable fact that sugar is sweet wherever you go. Translation is of course essential and greater effort is now being made in that direction. However, Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is a universal teaching. Whatever language you happen to speak, the Gohonzon will give you benefits, no matter in which country you live."

I once went to a certain country on a guidance tour. There a woman member came to me to seek advice. She did not seem to have practiced her faith very earnestly. She had secretly saved up a part of the household allowance, but her husband had discovered it, and a bitter quarrel had ensued. A headstrong woman, she had not spoken to her husband, done the laundry or prepared meals for an entire year. In the meantime she

began to chant a million daimoku, single-mindedly praying for a divorce.

I met her the day after she had completed her goal of a million daimoku. "I've heard that in this religion no prayer will go unanswered," she said. "So why hasn't mine been answered?"

I told her that prayers which will make one happy are fulfilled, but that those which would make one unhappy are not. What would happen if all wishes, both well- and ill-intended, were answered? I asked her, "You say you have chanted a million daimoku for a divorce, but how many daimoku have you chanted for your husband to take faith?" She replied that she had chanted none.

"Is it because you have a bad husband that you are suffering?" I asked her. "No, it isn't. It's because you have the karma to suffer on account of your husband. You say you have a bad husband, but you don't seem to realize that you haven't exactly been a good wife to him, either."

Then I told her about the Ikegami brothers who lived in Nichiren Daishonin's day. Their father strongly opposed their faith. In that respect, he was certainly a bad father. But why did the brothers have to undergo such fierce opposition? According to the Gosho, it was in order that they could change their destiny. Their father's opposition was in this sense a *zenchishiki* to them. People complain about their parents or spouses, but they themselves are the ones who are miserable. Buddhism views everything from the standpoint of the individual himself. If you are unhappy, it is because you

yourself made some cause for that unhappiness, whether in this lifetime or a previous one. However, when people are complaining about others, they aren't considering that they themselves may have created some bad karma in the past. That's why they don't even think of apologizing to the Gohonzon for that, but merely go on resenting their spouses or parents.

Finally I said to her, "Apologize to the Gohonzon for your past conduct, and pray for your husband to take faith in true Buddhism."

On the following morning the woman came to the airport in a hired car to see me off. "Thank you very much for your guidance last night," she said. "When I went home, knelt before the Gohonzon and chanted daimoku, I started crying and couldn't stop."

"You have been a selfish wife and an inconsiderate mother," I said to her. "If you practice your faith earnestly, you will not only become a good wife and a good mother, you will also grow into an indispensable asset for the movement of *kōsen-rufu*. When you go home, apologize to your children, too."

She looked embarrassed. "I have to apologize to my children, too?" she asked. She repeated the question two more times. I told her that any parent would apologize to his child if he stepped on its foot by mistake. Certainly no parent would refuse to do so simply because it was his own child.

The woman said that she found it difficult to apologize to her children. So I said to her, "If you chant daimoku to the Gohonzon and look at yourself, you will find yourself saying 'I'm sorry' to them quite naturally."

She promised me that she would strive in her human revolution so that she would be able to report her positive growth to me.

After I returned to Japan, I received a letter from her. She said that as soon as she came home from the airport, she prepared a meal and set it on the table, but her husband would not even touch it. Apparently she had not yet said "I'm sorry" to him. How could any husband accept a meal without an apology from a wife who had not spoken to him for an entire year!

She had not yet apologized to her children, she wrote, but when she told them all of what I had said to her, their attitude toward her changed a hundred and eighty degrees. The letter was filled with her determination to make a totally new start in faith.

This example shows how important it is to pray sincerely to the Gohonzon so that we can discern our destiny from a correct perspective, with the awareness that our own reformation is the key to solving all problems.

### Internal Cause and External Cause

EVERYONE has some worry or other. Some people are troubled by their spouses, others by their children, and still others by sickness. The purpose of faith is to correct the fundamental causes which bring about such suffering. You will never succeed in improving the situation as long as you only try to change the effect.

As the Gosho states, "If you try to treat someone's illness without knowing what the cause of the illness is, you will only make the person sicker than before."\*

No matter what your problem is, it is an effect. An effect invariably means that there was both an internal cause and an external cause which worked together to bring about that effect. An internal cause alone will not produce an effect, nor can an external cause by itself create an effect. Suppose we have a seed (internal cause). It will never sprout (effect) unless it is watered (external cause). Conversely, no matter how much water we may pour, nothing will sprout if there is no seed.

Since worry is an effect, there must be both internal and external causes which have combined to produce that effect. However, many people fail to realize that the fundamental cause lies within themselves, and instead blame others for acting as an obstacle. Suppose you are troubled by a tyrannical husband or a defiant child. Why did you have to marry such a man or bear such a child? It is because *you* have the destiny to suffer because of your husband or child. Until you understand this, you won't be able to understand Buddhism, either.

The cause for your present suffering lies in the past. You may have hurt your spouse or child in a past life (cause); therefore you yourself are being hurt by them in the present (effect). It is vital to realize this. President Toda once gave guidance to a member who had a polio-stricken child. Was he suffering because of the child?

\* *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. I (Tokyo: Nichiren Shoshu International Center, 1979), p. 193 (hereafter cited as *Major Writings*).

No, the child was only the external cause. He himself also had the karma or internal cause to have a sick child in his family. He was the one who felt the agony and who wanted to be released from it. If he would strengthen his faith and practice, President Toda said, then he himself could change his destiny, and his trouble would consequently be solved.

One day, a woman came to me to seek guidance. Her husband had been diagnosed as having cancer. She had prayed single-mindedly to the Gohonzon for him to recover, but up to that time his condition had shown no improvement.

"I gather your husband's practice is rather weak," I said to her. "While it is only natural to want your husband to get well, just praying for the recovery of someone who doesn't practice is like praying for a person who refuses to eat to be full and satisfied. If we could obtain benefits without practicing ourselves, then very few of us would practice earnestly; we could ask someone else to chant on our behalf.

"Strictly speaking, you cannot change your husband's karma. However, you can change your bad karma to suffer on account of your husband's illness. At the same time pray for your husband to be motivated by this illness to practice sincerely, and to become a person who can contribute toward *kōsen-rufu* in some way or other. This is what your attitude should be. You should earnestly pray to the Gohonzon, apologizing for any past negligence, and pledge to strive even more from now on. This is the correct way to practice faith."

From that day on, the woman offered sincere

prayers to the Gohonzon, examining her past attitude toward her faith. Then her husband's condition began to improve little by little. In one month he had recovered so much that he was allowed to spend weekends at home. Each time he returned to the hospital, the doctor was astonished to see his patient in much better health than before. The doctor, of course, did not know that he was chanting daimoku. "Tell me," he would ask the man, "just what kind of food are you getting at home?" This story tells us that, in the final analysis, the key to solving all our problems lies in changing our own bad karma for the better.

## Change Your Own Karma

MANY people who come to see me for guidance complain of their unhappiness and blame others—their husbands, wives, in-laws, children, leaders, this or that—indeed, everyone and everything but themselves. Virtually no one feels that his suffering is his own fault. Each and every one believes that he or she alone is entirely blameless.

A problem, no matter what kind, is an effect produced by the combination of an internal and an external cause. Here is a glass of water. Let's suppose that there is some sediment at the bottom. If you stir the contents, the water will become dirty. In this case, the sediment is the internal cause and the act of stirring is the external cause. Suppose we have a man and wife who lead a

cat-and-dog existence. Each insists that the other is to blame. It's like saying, "Because you stirred the water, it became dirty." But no matter how hard you stir, if there is no sediment the water will remain clear. People often fail to notice the sediment and simply accuse others of stirring up the water. In other words, they are not aware that the cause of their unhappiness lies within themselves and that they are merely experiencing the effect of that cause after it has been activated by someone else. In a quarrel, husband blames wife and wife accuses husband. No one ever gets into a fight thinking, "It's my own fault."

One day, President Toda was giving individual guidance at his office in Ichigaya, Tokyo. A woman complained, "My mother-in-law is perverse, malicious and will not change her ways no matter how often I ask her." She called the older woman all the names she could think of. "As young as you are, you are still unable to correct your *own* disposition," the president said to her. "How, then, can you expect your aged mother-in-law to change hers?" He went on to give her detailed guidance. Finally, the woman realized that the fundamental source of the problem was not her mother-in-law, but she herself. When she returned home, she found that her mother-in-law's attitude toward her had undergone a profound change for the better.

The above principle applies to all other problems as well. It is not your mate, your children or your parents who are to blame. First of all, you must change your own bad karma. That is the purpose of our faith. As long as you only complain about your spouse or children,

you'll never be able to solve your trouble. You must first consider why you are being hurt by them. Suppose you have a delinquent child. Fundamentally it is because you have the bad karma to be hurt by your child; this is the consequence of your negative causes formed in the past. Secondly, it is because you have assumed an incorrect attitude toward your faith, in not recognizing your own responsibility but simply blaming your child. If you change your bad karma which causes you to suffer on account of your child, he will change of his own accord. People whose children cause them heartache put the blame on them but, as I see it, the accusers are often more at fault than the accused.

The important thing is for you to recognize that your own bad karma is the cause of your unhappiness and pray for it to be changed. As the Goshō states, "Even a small offense will destine one to the evil paths if one does not repent of it. But even a great slander can be eradicated if one repents of it."\* You should squarely face your problems and wholeheartedly chant to the Gohonzon, apologizing for whatever offenses or slanders you may have committed in this and previous lifetimes. Then you must take action—that is, practice—in order to overcome them. If you do so there will be no destiny or karma which cannot be changed.

Suppose you have a debt of a million yen. If you have little money, you can't possibly repay it, but if you are told that if you return only 30,000 or 50,000 yen, the rest of the debt will be cancelled, you can pay it off

\**Nichiren Daishonin Goshō Zenshū* (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 1952), p. 930 (hereafter cited as *Goshō Zenshū*).

with relative ease. This illustrates the principle of lessening one's karmic retribution. What you have borrowed, you must return. You create a cause, and therefore you must receive its effect. However, through the blessings of your faith, you can experience the effects of your bad karma much more lightly. You will be able to overcome all karmic retribution, no matter how serious, and enter into the happiest state of life.

### Personal Wishes

I AM sure that each and every one of you has something or other which worries you. Worry arises when your wishes are not realized. You feel happy when your wishes are fulfilled, and you find yourself troubled when they are not. A certain leader admonished a member, saying, "When you face the Gohonzon, you must not pray for your personal wishes. You must pray single-mindedly for the attainment of *kōsen-rufu*." The member later came to me and asked whether or not that guidance was correct.

This is what I think. Some people are concerned *only* with their own personal wishes and desires. It is important to remind these people that one should pray, not only for personal matters, but also for *kōsen-rufu*. On the other hand, some members take too casual an attitude toward their everyday lives, believing that since they are praying for the realization of *kōsen-rufu*, their own problems will all be solved automatically. Such people often

begin to harbor doubts and ask, "I am always praying for *kōsen-rufu*. Why doesn't my personal situation improve?"

President Toda used to teach us in the following way: "Suppose you put rice and water in a pot, and then chant to the Gohonzon that it will cook. No matter how long you chant, you'll never get boiled rice." By this he was refuting the mistaken idea that benefits will come our way of themselves, if we only chant daimoku and make no further effort. We chant in order to gain wisdom—the wisdom which tells us to light the stove first and which helps us adjust the amount of water and the strength of the fire so that we can boil rice which is neither too hard nor too soft.

True, we should sincerely pray for *kōsen-rufu*. However, as long as we take an easygoing attitude, thinking that things will improve automatically, they rarely will. If we are to work for *kōsen-rufu*, our own lives must be established on a firm foundation, which we must do our utmost to construct. It is necessary, then, that we pray both for the attainment of *kōsen-rufu* and for the solution of our own personal problems when we face the Gohonzon.

### Inconspicuous Benefits

I OCCASIONALLY meet people who complain, "I've been chanting, but I'm not getting any benefits." As long as you earnestly practice your faith, it is absolutely

impossible not to receive any benefits. We cannot judge the Gohonzon's power merely by our own limited vision.

The eyes of common mortals are totally unreliable. They are limited in that, even when they are wide open, they can only see immediate benefits and cannot perceive the profound ones. For instance, if you happen to be involved in a serious traffic accident but emerge with only slight injuries, you offer your heartfelt gratitude to the Gohonzon. However, when the day ends uneventfully and you return home safe and sound, you grumble, "Nothing good happened to me today." This is the way of us common mortals.

When you recover from illness, you are overjoyed at receiving a benefit. However, when you have passed five or ten years without falling ill, you think nothing of it. You forget to thank the Gohonzon. You do not realize what a blessed thing it is to remain healthy for such a long time. In other words, we tend to fail to appreciate the Gohonzon's power unless we are involved in an accident, become ill or experience some other difficulty. Which is the greater benefit: to encounter misfortune and overcome it, or not to have any misfortune whatsoever? It goes without saying that the latter is far greater.

Buddhism terms readily visible but small benefits as "conspicuous," and invisible but great benefits as "inconspicuous." Small benefits are easy to recognize, but the great benefits take time before you notice them. What is an inconspicuous benefit like? Let me give you an analogy. Looking at me now, it is perhaps hard for you

to imagine, but I was very good-looking in my younger days. Each morning I woke up to find that I looked the same as I had the day before. This has gone on for days, months and years up until today. During all this time, there was not a single day on which I perceived any significant change in my appearance. However, now I am apparently a far cry from what I looked like as a boy, as far as my head is concerned at any rate. It's not like I woke up one morning to find my thick, beautiful hair completely gone.

This will help you understand inconspicuous benefits, but don't think that this is my inconspicuous benefit. It's just a story to illustrate my point. What I'm trying to say is that you should understand that something great is happening as long as you sincerely continue your faith, even when you don't recognize it. By maintaining pure faith for five, ten, fifteen years and so on, before you realize it you will have arrived at a completely happy state of life—one you could not even have imagined. This is inconspicuous benefit. It often happens that what seems to be disaster on the surface proves in the long run to have been a great benefit. The power of the Gohonzon—the power of the Buddha and of the Law—is absolute. Whether or not we can call forth that power depends on our powers of faith and practice. Please tell your members to exert themselves, never doubting the Gohonzon's power no matter what may occur, and always be convinced of the great blessings which will accrue from their practice.

### Attitude during Gongyo

THE posture we assume during gongyo is an expression of our faith in the Gohonzon. It is important that we assume a dignified posture, which is both fresh and solemn. You should sit with your back straight, while your eyes, filled with gratitude, look straight at Nam-myoho-rence-kyo inscribed down the center of the Gohonzon. During the silent prayers, keep your palms joined and bow your head naturally.

Gongyo and chanting constitute the basis of our faith, the prime point for accomplishing our objective—that is, our human revolution, the attainment of Buddhahood in this lifetime. Therefore, it is only natural to observe gongyo in the most respectful manner and with an earnest attitude. Bearing this in mind, please strive to improve your gongyo accordingly.

When two or more persons observe gongyo together, the participants should recite the sutra and chant daimoku in complete harmony with the one who leads. This is vital from the viewpoint of the principle of *itai dōshin* (many in body, one in mind). Suppose that all members of the family begin the day by doing morning gongyo together. Even if your child belatedly joins somewhere in the middle of gongyo, he does not need to start from the first prayer. The fervent prayer of the parent will complement the part which the child missed, so great is the power of the Gohonzon. However, if your child, taking advantage of this, makes it a habit

to join in late, you should of course correct him.

Even if your child joins toward the end of gongyo, he only has to do the remaining part and end it with the others, provided he is still very young. If he is of high school age or older, he should follow the others until they have finished, then start from the beginning or chant daimoku a little longer to compensate for the part he missed.

### When You've Been Drinking

GONGYO is the solemn ceremony during which we are in the presence of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. It is undesirable, therefore, to observe it under the influence of alcohol. In our everyday life, however, it sometimes occurs that, for business or other reasons, we cannot avoid drinking. In such cases, we should remind ourselves of the sacred nature of gongyo and observe it in a way appropriate to each situation.

For instance, if you have been drinking heavily, your manner during gongyo may tend to be careless and haphazard. This is highly disrespectful. At such times, you should only chant daimoku three times or, if your condition permits, a hundred times or more. The next morning, do gongyo even more earnestly than usual, determined to compensate for what you missed the night before. In case you have a hangover, relinquish the role of leading gongyo to someone else. However, even if you have been drinking, should your conscious-

ness remain clear with nothing hindering you from behaving normally, observe gongyo in the usual manner; you need not be overly anxious about it.

There is one thing you must avoid—an easygoing attitude which rationalizes, “Since I have a job of this nature, I can’t help it if I drink and therefore cannot do gongyo properly.” The vital thing is to maintain the strong awareness that you are a messenger of the Mystic Law. Then you will not allow yourself to drink so much that you cannot observe gongyo.

Even if your condition does not permit you to do gongyo, you should not justify yourself by saying, “I won’t do gongyo tonight because they say I shouldn’t when I’m drunk.” Rather, it is all the more reason to apologize sincerely to the Gohonzon.

### Springboard for Happiness

HOW should you give guidance to a member who is confronted with serious trouble? First of all, you yourself must have full confidence in the passage from the Gosho which states, “Great misfortune is always followed by great good fortune.”\* No matter how great the member’s misfortune may appear to be, the question is whether you yourself fully believe this principle of the Mystic Law. You may suspect that since his trouble is so serious, it may not be followed by great good

\*Gosho Zenshū, p. 1300.

fortune. That is not believing in this principle at all. The passage does not say, “Great misfortune is always followed by great good fortune, but super-great misfortune is not.”

If one of your members is faced with a serious problem, you must emphasize the above passage and sincerely try to convince him of the Gohonzon’s power. His victory or defeat, so to speak, lies in whether or not he can bring himself to believe in this teaching. If he takes faith in it, then all he has to do is practice exactly as the Daishonin teaches.

There is no problem whatsoever which cannot be turned into a springboard for happiness, no poison which cannot be changed into medicine. Even if one fails in business, he will be able to recover as long as he maintains his faith. It often happens, however, that when one fails in business, he also allows himself to fail in faith. This is something about which we must be careful.

Another important thing is to discern what each member is relying on. When some serious trouble occurs, one may tend to be shaken and turn to someone or something else for support. The other day, an assistant group chief came to see me. It was several days before a special discussion meeting scheduled to be held in commemoration of some anniversary. She was on the verge of tears as she related, “Although the meeting is drawing near, my group chief will not participate in activities. I visit his house every day and prod him, but he simply will not move an inch.”

“You have made your group chief, not the Gohonzon, the basis of your efforts,” I pointed out to her. “You

should reflect on your attitude in trying to rely on something other than the Gohonzon. Then, pray to hold as successful a discussion meeting as any other group whose chief and assistant chief are working in harmony. I think you forgot this spirit. That is the core of your problem."

If any of your members has a serious problem, remind him that before complaining about his predicament, he should chant and chant, no matter what may occur or what difficulty may face him. Convince him that this in itself will open a way to the solution of his problem.

### Priorities in Faith

SOME members say, "I'm too busy right now. I'll participate in activities when I have less work to do." We leaders tend to sympathize with them and leave things at that, but that is not giving guidance at all. Such people are like someone with an injured leg who, urged to go and see a doctor, says, "I cannot go because I have a broken leg. I'll go when I'm able to walk again." He fails to realize that precisely because he cannot walk, he should go consult a doctor. Likewise, those unable to engage in activities because of financial or business pressures should pray all the more fervently to solve such difficulties and strive to participate, no matter how infrequently.

Several years ago I met a jeweler. His wife was an

enthusiastic member, but he himself was not doing any activities at all. He said he had to work until nine or ten every evening. "You say you are too busy to participate in activities," I said to him. "But, certainly, you are allowed at least one day off each month. You are busy on all the other days. This is all the more reason why you should pray wholeheartedly that you'll be able to devote yourself fully to activities on your day off. Then, live up to that determination. That is the only way you'll be able to grow in faith."

Thus, when giving guidance to your members, you should not just sympathize with their troubles but try to make them call forth their powers of faith and practice. Through our conversation, the jeweler came to realize that his attitude toward faith had been wrong. He began to participate in activities as much as his work permitted. Now he is one of the top leaders in a ward in Tokyo. Please bear in mind what I've said when giving guidance.

### Accumulate Experience

FROM time to time I hear a leader bewail his lack of ability to give guidance. No matter what one may attempt to do, he will face difficulty in the early stages. No one is master of his art from the very beginning. Nor can one always develop his ability simply because he has a lot of time to practice or because he has spent months and years in his endeavor. The key is your eagerness. You must first awaken your eagerness, and

then master the fundamental principles of giving guidance in faith.

You may meet a mother worried about a child who refuses to go to school. You may encounter a wife anxious about her husband who will not take faith. No matter what the trouble may be, the principles in giving guidance are always the same. Once you acquire them, you can apply them to any problem. Giving guidance is an act of mercy. It also helps you grow as a human being.

Another thing you should bear in mind is that you cannot expect to grow in faith merely by receiving guidance. You must accumulate experiences of your own. Suppose your child is learning to ride a bicycle. No matter how elaborately you explain the technique to him, he will never acquire the knack of it until he actually gets on the bicycle, limps along, falls down a few dozen times, gets up and tries again. Likewise, no matter how difficult a problem your member may face, you should help him squarely tackle and resolve it. This will give you invaluable experience, which you can apply with conviction to any other problem of a similar nature. You should not think of a member with a problem as causing you hardship, for he is a precious *zenchishiki* (good influence) that can help you change your destiny.

You don't need to be disheartened, even if few of your members participate in activities. Trying to awaken inactive members is important, of course, but it is just as vital to consider how you can further develop those few who are active. Suppose your group consists of ten

members, of whom only three are active. In such a case, you can, for example, ask each of these three to take care of one of the inactive members. Since they now have their own roles to play, they will become even more enthusiastic in activities than before. If the combinations you set up at first do not go well, you can always change them around. Try any methods you can think of in order to strengthen your group.

Your visits to your members may not always end successfully. You may call on a member who has ceased to practice, and come out feeling discouraged because he failed to respond. If you carry your feeling of frustration with you to your next destination, deciding that this other person probably won't understand either, then you will not be able to give guidance which will move his life. You must call forth your faith and dispel your sense of disappointment, resolved that this time you will succeed without fail. Everybody has some worry or other. To discern what the problem is and give appropriate encouragement—this is the key to providing convincing guidance.

According to my experience, a leader who only gives guidance at meetings and does not make home visits is prone to incur the ill feelings of his members. This is because there is a lack of communication. On the other hand, a leader who frequently visits his members and takes good care of them is assured of steady personal growth. I hope you will fully exert yourselves in your activities, praying that each of your members will advance vigorously toward the goal of *kōsen-rufu*.

## Unity Is Crucial

WHAT should you, as a relatively young district chief, do to ensure harmony in your district? First of all, you must see to it that the members of each group unite in support of their chief. You must not attempt to play the central role yourself, but always assist the group chiefs so that they may find it easier to carry out their activities. Then all the group chiefs, even those who may be older than you, will come to unite with you at the center.

When you make home visits, depending on the circumstances, you may be well advised to bring along a group chief or a member who is older than you. The presence of elder members is an invaluable asset which facilitates district activities. If you are at a loss as to what guidance to give a member, you can ask one of your senior leaders to go with you. You must be careful, however, not always to depend on your senior leaders for assistance, or you yourself will not grow or develop your capability. Don't forget that you are the one responsible for building a firm basis for your district. With this awareness constantly in mind, work in harmony with the group chiefs in giving guidance, so that those who have not been practicing will begin to do gongyo and participate in the discussion meetings, and those who have been nurturing ill feelings toward other members can reflect upon themselves.

Just because you are the district chief does not mean

that you may lord it over the other leaders and members. The Soka Gakkai is an organization through which the members give and receive guidance, not one through which to exercise authority. If a father tries to force his children to obey by exercising his parental authority, they will resist him. Education specialists say that this is because children seek a counselor and not a tyrant in their father. A similar principle applies to personal relationships within a district. You must strictly refrain from flaunting your position as district chief in dealing with your members. Even though your words may not be overbearing, if you are inclined toward authoritarianism, it will show in your behavior.

Some of your members may be difficult to convince. Persist in giving them guidance, bearing in mind that because of them, you can advance your own human revolution. Be considerate about their respective situations. Ponder what you can do to make it easier for them to participate in activities and give them proper advice. Then, any gap which may have existed between you and your members will be bridged.

## Complaining Solves Nothing

ONCE a member of the men's division casually said to me, "My illness has improved considerably, but I have not yet completely recovered." So I said to him, "'But' is a word you often use when you complain. Unless you stop complaining, you will not be able to receive any

more benefit. If you praise someone or thank him and then follow it with a 'but,' you are not praising him or thanking him at all.

"Suppose you visit someone and the host serves you tea. If you said, 'You served me a cup of tea, but you failed to give me a second cup,' it would be very rude. On the other hand, if you say, 'This is superb tea. Could I have another cup, please,' the host will gladly comply with your request. It will be most impolite to the Gohonzon if you follow your thanks with a 'but.' Since you have gotten much better, you should first thank the Gohonzon for it. Then, since you have not yet been completely cured, pray to the Gohonzon for a perfect recovery. Don't confuse the two."

The man replied, "I understand. From today on I'll never say 'but.'" "Of course you won't," I said, "but what are you going to do about all the 'buts' you have said up until today?" This is the point most members seem to have difficulty in grasping. Suppose a person steals many things from other people and then says, "I am very sorry. I did it on impulse. I will never steal again." No matter how much he may apologize, unless he returns the things he stole, he will not be able to compensate for his crime.

A passage in the Goshō states, "Even a small offense will destine one to the evil paths if one does not repent of it. But even a great slander can be eradicated if one repents of it."\* Another passage reads, "These people seemed to have repented, but apparently they had not

\*Goshō Zenshū, p. 930.

repented profoundly enough."\* Without action, that is, practice, you will not be able to erase your misdeeds, even should you repent of them. The law of cause and effect is strict. What you stole, you must return. If you abuse other people, you too will be spoken ill of. If you harass others, you will be harassed in return. This is what Buddhism teaches us. It is therefore important that you pledge to the Gohonzon that from now on you will do your best in whatever respect, and then be true to your word.

### Find the Basic Cause

SOME of the younger leaders of the men's division say that they find it difficult to give guidance because they have little experience or because many of their members are older than they. Do we need to have much experience in order to give guidance in faith? I don't think so. Of course it is desirable to have lots of experience, but even if we don't, we can still give good guidance.

To give guidance in faith means to tell your member, from the Buddhist point of view, where the cause of his problem lies and how he should tackle it, so that he will try to solve it on the basis of faith. Most people attribute their troubles to someone or something outside themselves. They are not aware that they themselves are responsible for creating those problems, and that they

\*Ibid., p. 1523.

are part of their own karma. In other words, they fail to realize that they must first change their own destiny to suffer those problems. Hence their inability to find a fundamental solution.

In order to give guidance to such people, what is required is not so much a wide range of experience as for you yourself to return to the fundamentals of faith and deepen your own faith. The only way to do this is to pray earnestly to the Gohonzon. By emphasizing your lack of experience, you are simply trying to save face in case you fail to give excellent guidance. Unless you take a more constructive attitude, you will never be able to give good guidance in faith, no matter how much experience you accumulate.

Suppose a member comes to us, says that he has some disease and needs a surgical operation, and asks what he should do. Now, we are not doctors; we are not in a position to tell him whether he should undergo the operation or not. What we can do, instead, is to tell him about the cause of illness from the Buddhist standpoint.

Second President Toda used to say, "Suppose a member falls seriously ill. If he falters in faith, he may not recover, no matter how skilled his doctor may be. On the other hand, if he has a firm faith, he will improve even though he may consult a quack." When giving guidance in such cases, the most important point is to let the sick member realize that his suffering stems from his own life, and that the only way to change it fundamentally is to chant daimoku. When a member has a complicated problem, even leaders with many years of

faith sometimes tend to see only the surface and fail to discern the fundamental cause. We should avoid forming hasty conclusions in such cases.

I have one piece of advice for younger leaders who are newly appointed. They are apt to think that the members who are older than they are now *under* them. Of course I realize that most of them know it is wrong to regard their positions in terms of a superior-subordinate relationship. However, when they say it is difficult to give guidance because of their lack of experience, it is often because they inwardly feel that they are now *above* their members. Positions in the Soka Gakkai are an indicator of responsibility, not of rank or power. The higher your position, the greater your responsibility. Please do not be confused about this point.

## The Role of Leaders

LET us consider what it means to be a district chief. As I said before, positions in the Soka Gakkai are a yardstick of responsibility. The group chief, the district chief, the chapter chief—each has his own responsibility to discharge. To be promoted from group chief to district chief means only that you must shoulder that much more responsibility. Even though you have become a district chief, don't think that you have risen to greatness or that the vice district chief, who used to be your senior, is now your subordinate. If you think this way, you will face difficulties in carrying out your activities.

As district chief, you have the responsibility to teach each member in your district the greatness of faith in the Gohonzon and lead him to happiness. They are not your subordinates in any way. The organization of the Soka Gakkai is essentially different from that of a company. It is a gross mistake to think you are the greatest person in your district or to try to order your members about.

I repeat—don't think you are above your members. Instead, think this way: "I am younger and more energetic than others. That's why I've been assigned a larger range of activity." Each position entails a corresponding scope of activity. The larger the area, the greater and the heavier the responsibility.

When dealing with a member who was previously your senior, if you pity him because you have risen above him, that feeling will convey itself to him and may produce an undesirable effect. Instead, you should recognize his capability and try to enable him to give it full play. In my opinion, to be a district chief is nothing extraordinary. All you need to do is give advice to each group chief through the experience you acquired while you yourself were a group chief. What you should do as a district chief is to utilize your experience for developing each group in your district into a splendid body of people.

It is a mistake to think that your duty is to give orders and directions. Take the home, for example. Children hate to be ordered about by their parents. If the mother talks to her daughter as kindly as a sister would, the daughter will welcome her advice. But, if she exercises

her parental authority by trying to make her obey, the daughter will resist her. There will be even greater resistance in your district if you assume a high-handed manner. As long as you take the attitude that since you are the district chief and they are your members, they should accept whatever you say, your members will never be convinced. The third president, Mr. Ikeda, used to say that guidance means to give encouragement.

What does it mean to be an outstanding district chief? In the final analysis, I think it means to foster many outstanding group chiefs. This applies to all positions. An able chapter chief, for instance, is one who produces many able district chiefs. A capable group chief is one who, through his guidance, makes each member in his group strive to deepen his faith, practice and study. There must be something amiss if the district chief is great but none of his group chiefs is. To sum up, it is the district chief's duty to develop each group chief into an excellent leader and to help every member of his district to truly understand Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

However, theory is one thing, while practice is quite another. For instance, Soka Gakkai publications repeatedly stress the importance of gongyo, and that members should strictly observe gongyo both morning and evening. You would think that with so much emphasis placed on gongyo, no one would ever miss it. But, in reality, some members find it hard to do gongyo.

This is all the more reason why the responsibilities of the district chief and the group chief are both important and difficult to perform. If a schoolteacher dumps

all that he has ever learned on his students, he cannot expect to achieve good results. He should instead ponder how to impart his knowledge according to the different grades, and then prepare an effective curriculum.

Likewise, it is inadvisable for the district chief to deluge his members, irrespective of their different situations, with all that he has learned from his senior leaders or through his own experience. A district consists of many people who are in different circumstances—those who have joined only recently, those being swayed by their environment, those whose families oppose their faith, those too busy to participate in activities, those who bear grudges against a leader, and so on. As long as you feel that you have a hard time because of this or that member, you yourself will be unable to grow. Rather, accept it as an excellent chance to further your own growth. To treasure each and every member in your district, consider their problems as your own, find the solution together with them and encourage them—this is your mission as district chief. Therein lies the way for you to accumulate good fortune. I hope you will be convinced of this and proceed in your activities with confidence.

### Introduce Members to Seniors

PARENTS and their children are always together. It sometimes happens that your child becomes too accustomed to your admonitions to listen to you but still

obeys his schoolteacher. So, in such a case, it is a good idea for you to ask the teacher to talk to the child. That is showing your mercy toward him. You should never scold him, shouting, "Who do you think has paid for your food and clothing up until today? How dare you disobey me and listen to a person who is not even your relative!"

This principle also applies to individual guidance. Suppose you are a district chief. You have given guidance to a certain member two or three times, but he still refuses to listen. The more you speak to him, the greater the ill feeling he harbors against you. In such a case, you might do better to ask a chapter-level leader to talk to him or take him with you to the headquarters chief. Never be so narrow-minded as to reproach a member or a group chief for passing over you in favor of a senior leader to seek guidance.

In the early days of the Soka Gakkai, members were advised to receive guidance from leaders two levels higher than they. The chapter chief was to give guidance and encouragement to group chiefs, the district chief to unit chiefs, and the group chief to unit members. I believe this principle is applicable even now. But one thing you should keep in mind is that the leader who is "in between" must be well aware of the circumstances of the member who seeks guidance from a higher leader. Otherwise, misunderstanding may arise.

## Don't Blame Others

(To a woman who is worried about her husband not professing faith)

I'M sure you've heard the story of a man who was scared out of his wits at the sight of a withered tree. He felt so isolated and terrified walking through the darkness of night that, when he saw a tall tree swaying in the wind, he took it for a ghost. It was he who was terror-stricken, and it was his own timidity which caused that fear. In other words, he was both his own attacker and victim. It would have been no use suing the tree, for trees have no inherent power to frighten people. If they did, we would never be able to admire their beauty.

I cited this story because I want you to understand that whether or not you can solve your problem with your husband depends on your own determination. Right now you feel it is his fault that you cannot participate in activities. However, his opposition is only the external cause; there is also an internal cause within yourself. Viewed from this principle, you have the bad karma to suffer on account of your husband. In order to change your problem, there is no other alternative but to grapple squarely with it. It is precisely because your husband is not yet a member that you must strengthen your faith and pray to the Gohonzon so that you will be able to do activities together with him as soon as possible.

You say your husband is strong in his obstinacy. Conversely speaking, this means that you are weak.

I don't mean that you should be equally obstinate in arguing with him, but rather, that you should be strong in your determination to challenge your own destiny. Don't bear a grudge against your husband. Rather, become someone he can trust. Fundamentally, you must change your own karma. When you exert yourself toward realizing your human revolution and take responsibility for your family's happiness, your husband will inevitably come to recognize the great power of the Mystic Law and eventually take faith in it.

## Good Influence

IN the practice of faith we should be careful not to lapse into force of habit. We must constantly renew our determination and assume a fresh, positive approach. Sometimes you may find it hard to participate in activities because you have much work to do, because you are in financial straits, or because you are busy with household chores or with your children. However, it is precisely because of such difficulties that you should resolve to chant daimoku all the more earnestly, bringing forth your Buddha wisdom to change your situation for the better.

An employee cannot get paid unless he goes to his company and performs his job. Then, what about our practice of faith? Do we receive a month's worth of benefit if we engage in activities for thirty days straight, and three days' worth of benefit if we do activi-

ties only for three days? We know that this is not true. You've probably heard the story in the Gosho of a woman who, having no money, cut off her hair, sold it, obtained a small amount of oil and burned it as an offering to the Buddha. A strong wind blew and extinguished all the gorgeous lamps donated by the wealthy, but the woman's humble lamp continued to burn throughout the night. No matter how busy your work is or how financially pressed you may be, you must determine to find even a little time to fight for *kōsen-rufu* and repay your debt of gratitude to the Gohonzon. This is a major cause for accumulating good fortune.

Let's assume that every weekday you must stay late at work, or that you must be out of town on business six days a week. Most people's tendency is to be overcome by the situation at hand and say they are just too busy to participate in activities. In such cases, however, it is important to chant daimoku to the Gohonzon to be able to create the same value as a full week's activities in the one or two days available to you. By so doing, you will eventually achieve a state of life in which you can devote as much of your time as you please to activities.

True, all living things possess the Buddha nature, but it will not manifest itself unless it comes into contact with a good influence. No seed will sprout if it is not covered with earth. The seed is the internal cause, and earth is the external cause. These two combine to produce the effect—the sprouting. In Buddhism, an external influence which helps us manifest our Buddha nature is called a *zenchishiki* or good influence. In our

everyday life, we have various worries and troubles because of our mates, children, sickness, financial difficulties, and so on. When you chant daimoku and engage in *shakubuku* in order to resolve such agony and change your destiny, your distress will be transformed into a springboard for your human revolution. Then all your worries and troubles become *zenchishiki*. Don't be discouraged by difficulties and trials or let them be excuses for not participating in activities. Instead, make them causes for your growth and look at them in proper perspective. That is the correct way to practice faith.

### Need for Sincerity

SOMETIMES members entertain grudges or ill feelings against each other. For instance, they resent their chapter chief for being too severe or their district women's chief for being too annoying. No one wants to be hated or incur enmity. Everyone wants to be spoken well of as a fine person. If you don't want to be criticized by your members, continue to give soft-worded, pleasant-sounding guidance. You go to see a member and ask whether he is doing gongyo regularly. He replies, "No. I'm too busy." You say, "I understand. Please do gongyo when you have time. Good-bye." You visit another member and urge him to study Buddhism. He says, "I don't like to study Buddhism, or anything else for that matter." You say, "I see. Well, if you should begin

to like it, then please study." As long as you speak in this way, you will never be disliked by your members, but neither will you receive any benefit. If you sincerely want to make them happy, you must speak to them in various ways, sometimes mildly and sometimes severely, as the situation demands.

In my early days of faith I heard nothing but the theory of value and the theory of negative effects. I thought the theory of negative effects must be the monopoly of the Soka Gakkai. Upon close examination, however, I've discovered that it is mothers who utilize this theory more often than anyone. They are always reminding their children of the negative effects which will be forthcoming if they fail to mind.

"If you run out into the street, you'll be hit and killed by a car."

"You'll have a stomachache if you eat so much."

"Be careful of the kettle, or you'll get scalded."

As we look back, we can appreciate that we survived safely because our mothers continued to warn us against doing this or doing that. If you let a baby do anything he pleases, he won't survive. Aside from the question of how they go about it, we can say that parents scold their children because they want them to grow up to be fine people. They would never admonish them if they didn't care what became of them. However, it is one thing to reprimand our children with their well-being uppermost in mind, and quite another to scold them out of frustration or emotion. The same holds true when we give guidance. If we lack sincere concern for their happiness, our members will not take our guidance to

heart, no matter how cleverly phrased it may be. For their own part, members will benefit if they can take their leaders' guidance not emotionally but as being given for their own sake.

While you were small, your parents probably used to give you a good scolding now and then. At the time, you must have felt it was a miserable thing to be a child. Now that you've grown up and have your own children, I'm sure you truly appreciate your parents, saying to yourselves, "Now I understand why they scolded me."

This also applies to leader-member relationships. Take, for instance, those members who resent their chapter chief for being too severe. They should understand that—aside from the question of whether or not he expresses himself tactfully—he gives them advice because he wants them to be happy.

A member may harbor a grudge against his leader when he receives severe guidance. But the more strictly he is reprimanded, the more grateful he will be when he comes to fully understand the greatness of faith. You may think of your district women's chief as being too annoying. But when you yourself are appointed to that position, you'll certainly begin to realize how sincere she was. I was no exception. I took faith only after fiercely opposing it for some time. For all that, when I came to understand how great this Buddhism is, I reproached the person who had introduced it to me, saying, "If you had been more insistent, I could have joined much earlier."

We must help new members understand faith by

taking good care of them, teaching them how to do gongyo and studying the Goshō together with them. We must resolve to bring happiness to our members as well as to ourselves. True happiness lies in making that determination and putting it into practice. I hope you will engage in giving guidance pleasantly and confidently, always with utmost thoughtfulness for your members.

### Positive Attitude

IT is the way of common mortals to find fault with other people while failing to see their own faults. Let me cite the example of a woman I once heard about in order to illustrate my point. She was never very enthusiastic about her practice. The excuses she gave for her inactivity were legion: because her parents had not cared much about her education, because she got married, because she bore a child, because the child was still very young, because she had another child, because her children had to go to school, because she had to work to pay their school fees because her husband's salary was very low, because she was in ill health because of overwork, etc.

When her children had grown up, her excuses were: because they got married, because they had children, because she had to baby-sit them, and so on. She never realized that, precisely because of those reasons, she should have prayed to the Gohonzon all the more fer-

vently so that she would be able to participate in activities. She was a young woman when she took faith, and now she is a grandmother. All this time she has continued to say "because of this" or "because of that." Yet she always tells other members that they will never accumulate good fortune as long as they complain. She is a typical example of those people who fail to see themselves. When they cannot pass an examination, they say that they failed because they had too little time to study or because the questions asked were not from the materials they had studied.

The same holds true with the positions in the Soka Gakkai—say, the district chief. Suppose you have been appointed to that position. Now you will have to take care of many members. If you think, "Oh, what a hard time I'm going to have," your attitude toward faith is one of complaint. I don't think there is any district chief who took faith in order to attain that position. Most of them probably joined in order to solve some trouble or other. However, their missions required that they become district chiefs. If they don't feel equal to their position, that is all the more reason to pray earnestly to the Gohonzon to be able to fulfill that responsibility. This is the correct attitude toward faith.

Those who tend to get caught up in the past are apt to complain. But no matter how much they may complain, they will not be able to attain enlightenment in this lifetime or accomplish their human revolution. So, if you have time to complain, you would be much wiser to devote that time to chanting to the Gohonzon. With this attitude firmly established, you will be able

to lead a life of fulfillment, brilliant with the glory of your human revolution. I hope each and every one of you will continue your faith in the spirit of "start from now" throughout your lives.

### Benefit and Loss

IN practicing faith it is important that we do not allow ourselves to be swayed by external influences. Some members leave the faith simply because other members are involved in a traffic accident or lose property in a fire. Isn't this acting a little too impetuously? Such people seem to believe that someone with faith should not die, get hurt, meet any accident or suffer loss in any way. Were that to be true, it would create terrible confusion in society. For instance, Soka Gakkai members would feel that they no longer need to stop for red lights because they could never have an accident or, even if they did, they could never get killed.

"How old are you, granny?"

"Three hundred and sixty-five."

A person's face already bears quite a few wrinkles at the age of sixty-five; what would it look like three hundred years later?

Refrigerators would sell poorly.

"Even if we eat spoiled food, we won't get sick because we practice faith."

"Since we have faith, we won't die even if we don't eat. Therefore we don't need to work."

Thus the world would be filled with lazy people. However, none of these things are in any way true.

Now, some members may protest, "Then it makes no difference whether we have faith or not, does it?" True, one's house may burn down, whether he practices faith or not. But we cannot tell just by looking at the immediate occurrence whether it is a benefit or loss. No incident can be categorically defined as benefit or loss in and of itself. Each phenomenon invariably contains the potential for either.

Suppose someone's house burns down. At the moment we cannot tell whether it is benefit or loss. What is important is how things will go after this mishap. Will he be able to live in a better house, or will he be reduced to living in a wretched shack? We need to wait for some time in order to determine whether that fire was a benefit or loss.

Both benefit and loss are divided into three kinds: major, medium and minor. Go ahead and take a minor loss if it promises a major benefit. On the other hand, avoid a minor benefit which entails a major loss. For example, one who drinks methyl alcohol obtains the minor "benefit" of becoming merry, which, however, is followed by a severe loss—that is, the loss of his sight. A thief may think he is doing well because he doesn't have to pay for the things he acquires, but the more he steals, the longer he must serve in prison.

As long as we continue our faith, we can change any kind of poison into medicine. Don't be defeated by any difficulty or swayed by any external influence. Instead, continually strengthen your faith so that you can turn

anyone and anything into a good influence, a springboard for you to advance toward your happiness.

### Devilish Functions

THOSE functions which work to save people from misery and make them happy are called the functions of the "Buddha." On the other hand, those which try to block the functions of the "Buddha" and bring unhappiness to people are termed functions of "devils." Our own lives possess both these functions. Part of oneself urges him to act constructively while the other part tells him not to, because it's too troublesome.

I'm sure you remember how these two functions fought against each other before you decided to take faith. "Shall I start practicing?" "No, I'd better not." The question is which side wins. I know one member who kept saying to himself, "Shall I start practicing?" and "No, I'd better not," for no less than twelve years.

Then, does everything go smoothly once you surmount that first hurdle? Not exactly. Even after you take faith, two different voices continue to address you. On the evening of a discussion meeting, one of them keeps saying, "Let's go," while the other repeats, "Stay home." In the meantime it starts raining, and you finally decide not to go.

Devilish functions never announce, "I am a devil, sent here by the Devil of the Sixth Heaven." They are called devils precisely because, at first glance, they are not

identifiable as such. Therefore, if you are off your guard, you will fall easy prey to them.

At one place I visited, a couple came to seek my advice. They had brought their child with them. As soon as they were seated before me, they began to quarrel with each other. The husband said that his wife was a devil, so I said to him, "Then it follows that you are the husband of a devil and this child is the child of a devil. Isn't that correct?" As might have been expected, he was at a loss to answer.

In this man's case, neither his wife nor his child was to blame. It was his own negativity that was the source of his unhappiness. We use the word "devil" in Buddhism. However, it does not indicate an imaginary evil spirit or being such as those depicted in pictures but rather means the negative functions innate in life. We encounter the workings of these functions in our everyday lives. Devilish functions cease to work when we recognize them as such and defeat them through fervent prayer to the Gohonzon.

### Refrain from *Onshitsu*

(To a district chief who finds himself caught between his senior leader and a group chief who harbors a grudge against that leader)

WE did not take faith in order to criticize our leaders. Criticism does not solve problems. Suppose your friend has financial problems. No matter how much you may

spout off about how poor he is, neither you nor he will become wealthy. The essential thing is for both of you to practice Buddhism to change your respective karmas for the better.

Some senior leaders may lack generosity and warmth, something which makes junior members feel antagonistic. However, nowhere in the Goshō does it say that, in such cases, you are justified in committing any of the fourteen slanders. If, for any reason whatsoever, you despise, hate, envy or resent other members, you are committing the last four of the fourteen slanders: disrespect of believers, hatred of believers, jealousy toward believers and grudges against believers. These are the causes which will block all the good fortune which you could otherwise accumulate. It is important to consider your present position from the viewpoint of faith, for faith is what we must maintain throughout our lives.

You say you are having a hard time, caught between the senior leader and the group chief. You should be convinced, however, that that very difficulty is an opportunity for you to grow. If, on the other hand, you let yourself be carried away by the situation and entertain ill feelings toward either or both of these two people, you will receive negative effects and cannot become happy. What, then, is the purpose of having continued your faith? Please give detailed guidance to this effect to the group chief, too. Even so, he may not easily understand. In that case, you have the Gohonzon to pray to. As long as you merely complain about the situation, you won't be able to solve the problem.

It is no use simply praying to the Gohonzon that this or that member correct his various faults. It is like saying, "That cat bothers me; it always scratches me badly. I think I'll cut off its claws." Now, a person who is afraid of a cat's claws is, figuratively speaking, a mouse of a man. If we become dogs, we will have no reason to fear cats; or, better still, we should become lions. What I'm trying to say is this: All of us are following the way of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. We should therefore regard all problems as so many potentially good influences and, using them as stimuli, strive for our human revolution, elevating our state of life even a little each day.

The third president, Daisaku Ikeda, once said: "... Yet, we are all human. There may be some senior leaders you do not like. There may be some members you cannot stand. Even if you are told to like them, there are times when you just cannot. I think that it is natural for you to dislike someone, but there is a difference between dislike and *onshitsu* [committing the last four of the fourteen slanders]. If you refuse to practice together with someone or refuse to listen to guidance about faith just because you don't like a certain person, that is *onshitsu*. . . ." We do not carry out activities for the sake of those whom we dislike; we do so in order to fulfill the mandate left us by Nichiren Daishonin. For this purpose, we should practice together even with those whom we dislike, utilize them as good influences for further polishing our character, and become excellent believers.

Let me add a few words here. When a member bears

a grudge against a leader, the leader may well be at fault, but the member is equally to blame. This member tends to think that he is one hundred percent right, and the other person one hundred percent wrong. Now, we know that this is not true. As I always say, Buddhism maintains that an effect is produced by the combination of an internal and an external cause. As long as the member fails to reflect upon the internal cause—his own inclination toward *onshitsu*—and only blames the external cause—the leader—there can be no solution to the problem. Nichiren Daishonin sternly forbids us to bear grudges against other believers, saying, “All those who keep faith in the Lotus Sutra are most certainly Buddhas, and one who slanders a Buddha commits a grave offense.”\*

Of course, leaders must strictly avoid speaking or acting in such a way as may incur the antagonism of members. They must respect each and every member and be most sincere in their dealings with him. For their own part, those members who are apt to be swayed by external influences and bear grudges against their leaders must reflect upon their low life-condition and earnestly chant daimoku to elevate it. When one realizes that the basic cause of his unhappiness lies nowhere but in himself and that other people are merely influences, he is taking the first step toward his human revolution.

\*Gosho Zenshū, p. 1382.

## Proper Perspective

I WOULD like to tell you about a member of the young women's division in a certain country overseas. When she was a junior high school student, her father deserted his family. Anguished, her mother took faith in Nichiren Shoshu. The daughter understood almost nothing about Buddhism, but, profoundly impressed by her mother's earnestness, she began to chant daimoku with her every day.

Three months later, the culprit returned. Furthermore, through his wife and daughter's sincere *shakubuku*, he finally began to practice the Daishonin's Buddhism. Now, ten years later, the daughter has grown up to be a superb leader of the young women's division in her country. Her mother is also active as a leader of the women's division there.

Once I had a chance to meet this girl. I said to her, “To you, your father was *zenchishiki*, a good influence. You should not harbor ill feelings toward him but be grateful to him. If he had not disappeared, your mother would not have taken faith in Buddhism, and if she had not done so, neither would you. In that case, you could not possibly have attained your present state of life.” I added, “Had you not met the Gohonzon, you would probably have blamed your father for having made your mother unhappy and continued to hate him throughout your life. However, faith in the Gohonzon can change hatred into gratitude and make it the cause

for your own growth. Herein lies the greatness of the Gohonzon's power." Nodding, she said, "Now I understand, completely."

It is in a muddy swamp that beautiful lotus flowers blossom. Suppose you are one of those flowers. At first you may find the mud repulsive, but on second thought, you can understand that because of that mud you were able to grow and blossom. Then you will realize that you should not resent the mud. Likewise, if you regard all your circumstances, no matter how adverse, as so many good influences and persist with pure and strong faith, you will never fail to find a way out of your troubles. Be firmly convinced of this and strive even more to deepen your faith.

### Body and Shadow

AT the various places I visit to give individual guidance, I meet many people who are suffering from illness. I myself do not possess any occult healing powers. What I give is not medical advice but guidance in faith so that they can come to understand the causes of their illnesses and thereby conquer them.

Illness is the effect of some cause, so first I have them consider what that cause may be. The Gosho says, "Buddhism is the body and the world, the shadow. When the body is crooked, so is the shadow."\* There

\*Gosho Zenshū, p. 992.

may well be something in their practice of faith which requires correction or improvement. I help them understand what that something is, apologize to the Gohonzon and resolve to change their attitude in faith. Some of them find that they bear grudges against other members. Some become aware that their attitude in faith has been one of complaint, always saying "but this" or "but that." Others realize that they have scarcely been chanting daimoku. Still others discover that they have blamed someone or something else for their illness when the cause actually existed within themselves. The key to good guidance lies in letting people reflect on their attitude in faith and make a new determination.

After receiving guidance, you realize what has been amiss and resolve to rectify it. You probably say, "I will be most careful from now on. I will do my best." But what are you going to do about all the things you have done wrong so far? It is important that you sincerely apologize to the Gohonzon for having been unaware of your errors. Only through such apology and a firm determination toward the future can your various wishes be fulfilled.

### Aftercare Vital

CERTAINLY no parents would feel completely satisfied and reassured just because they had their sick child treated by an eminent doctor at a reputable hospital. If they did, they could not truly be said to love their child.

No matter how famous their doctor may be, they will naturally still worry about their child and take care of him as best they can. Is the child getting better? Should they feed him more nutritious food? Is he really on the road to recovery? And so on. If his condition remains the same, they will take him to the hospital again.

The same holds true with guidance in faith. Some leaders feel everything is fine because their members have already received guidance from such and such senior leaders. This is not necessarily so. Leaders closest to the members should always be attentive as to whether those members have accurately grasped the guidance they received from their senior leaders or whether they have reinterpreted it to suit their own convenience. Suppose a sick person brings home several kinds of medicine. His family will see to it that he uses them correctly and does not take an overdose. Likewise, those leaders closest to the members must carefully look after those who have received guidance from senior leaders. This is in part what it means to "treasure each and every member."

For a leader, it is important both to have his members receive guidance and also to receive it himself. Furthermore, when his members do receive guidance, it is important to observe carefully whether they are truly "changing poison into medicine," consider their troubles as if they were his own and look out for them until they have solved their problems.

Thus it often requires more than one leader for guidance to be truly effective. The best results occur when there is good coordination and communication between

the leader who helps his member receive guidance and the leader who gives guidance to that member. When the member has solved his problem, it means that he has obtained a benefit from the Gohonzon. His leaders should encourage him to relate this experience at discussion meetings and talk about it to other people, both members and non-members. In this way he is repaying his debt of gratitude to the Gohonzon. The deeper his gratitude to the Gohonzon, the more benefits he will receive, and the more experiences he will have to share. Those who hear his experiences will be awakened or reawakened to the greatness of faith. Thus the circle of good fortune will go on expanding.

You should not just simply rejoice that you have recovered from illness or overcome a particular problem. You must remember to show your gratitude to the Gohonzon. In this way you will feel still greater joy, and accumulate even more good fortune.

### The Best Influence

YOU may think there are innumerable points to bear in mind when giving individual guidance, but actually there are not so many. The essential thing is that the person giving guidance fully understands the purpose of such guidance. The Japanese equivalent of "guidance" is *shidō*, *shi* meaning "to point to" and *dō* meaning "to guide." What do you point to and to where do you guide someone? Naturally you point to the purpose of

faith and guide him to the Gohonzon, the basis of our faith.

I have met with many members who, faced with various problems and troubles, were plunged into the depths of agony. One thing such people have in common is that they all forget about the limitless power of the Gohonzon at the most crucial moment. They become so overwhelmed by events taking place around them that their faith in the Gohonzon diminishes. The first and most important point you should remember in giving individual guidance is to make them realize this fact. In other words, you should tell them not to be swayed by external phenomena but to return to the Gohonzon, the basis of their faith.

A human life is easily influenced. This vulnerability cannot be corrected simply by mental discipline. When you read a tragedy, tears fill your eyes. When you read a hilarious story, you burst into laughter in spite of yourself. Thus human life, this mysterious entity, manifests various conditions in response to external influences. A postcard is nothing but a piece of paper. However, if it carries a threat, the recipient trembles with fear. On the other hand, if it is full of affectionate phrases, he leaps for joy. Therefore, the important thing in life is to encounter good influences. If so, what better influence is there than the Gohonzon, the source of the fundamental power to solve any kind of problem?

For what purpose is a human being born in this world? In the final analysis, he is born to become happy and to fulfill his mission. Tree leaves emerge in spring, proliferate in summer and fall to the earth in autumn.

That is their normal pattern of life. However, some leaves are eaten by worms, while others are not. Some leaves are blown away by the wind; others remain on the branches. Similarly, while all people strive in their own way to become happy, some of them fall ill, and others don't. There are those who meet disasters and those who remain safe and sound. Whether one likes it or not, there are various differences among human beings. People often attribute such differences to either good or bad luck. Buddhism does not. According to Buddhism, such disparities result from karma created in previous existences. People must suffer in this life because of the causes they formed in the past.

Everyone wants to be happy. When, contrary to one's expectations, he meets failure or suffering, he may tend to blame it on others or on society. True, other people or society may be responsible as external causes, but no problem can be completely solved unless one seeks out the fundamental cause. Those who embrace the Gohonzon are no exception. It is vital to let members understand that the causes of everything they experience lie within them. However, just to realize this is not enough. They must endeavor to change poison into medicine. By earnestly praying to the Gohonzon in order to change their destiny for the better, they can transform their bad karma into the cause for happiness. That is why our Buddhism is called the Mystic Law. You must bear this in mind when giving individual guidance.

## Compassionate Prayer

HOW should you deal with those members who have ceased practicing? The only way is to continue giving patient guidance, appropriate to each situation. People will not stand up and act merely because of your words. Were words enough, you would only have to record a senior leader's guidance on tape and let inactive members listen to it. Then there would be no need for so many leaders. This, of course, would never work. Why not? Because guidance is not just words but a totality of the personality, sincerity, and enthusiasm of the person giving the guidance, as well as the content of what he says. All of these express one's compassion. Continue to give guidance patiently until your compassion shakes the other person's life at its foundation.

If you fail the first time, try again. If you still do not succeed, visit the member a third time, a fourth time and so on, with an appropriate interval in between. He will be impressed not so much by the frequency of your visits or the content of your talk as by the compassion and enthusiasm with which you try to awaken him. The benefits you receive do not depend on whether or not the other person resumes his practice. Paying him frequent visits and talking to him in earnest is in itself carrying out the Buddha's work.

We are told that we should give guidance through our own example of human revolution. This is as it should be, to be sure, but in reality we ourselves are

still in the process of our own human revolution. If we had to perfect ourselves first before we could give guidance, we might have to wait indefinitely. Think of this in terms of a parent-child relationship. If parents had to set a perfect example for their children, almost no one would be qualified. Faith, however, can compensate for this lack of qualification. Your fervent and compassionate prayer that your children will earnestly practice Buddhism will convey itself to their hearts. The same principle applies to individual guidance. Your compassion for the other person and your prayer that he will resume his practice will strike a responsive chord in his heart and activate his Buddha nature.

If you think you are having a hard time because of this or that member, you are viewing things superficially. If you are a district chief, then all the troubles facing your district members are food for your own growth. Only when you grapple squarely with all these problems can you change your own destiny for the better by creating good causes and accumulating good fortune. With this conviction, continue to give guidance so that as many of your members as possible will be awakened to the greatness of faith.

## Harmonizing Role

A VICE chief at any level of our organization might be compared to a ball bearing in an automobile. In an automobile, steel balls are placed where the wheel joins

the axle. Fixed neither to the axle nor to the wheel, they enable the wheel to revolve smoothly and efficiently. What if an automobile lacked ball bearings? The wheels would turn around, to be sure, but the car would not be able to achieve much speed. A vice chief, like a ball bearing, works to bring harmony to the organization.

Let's take the family as an example. Suppose the child has failed to do his homework, is naughty or disobedient. One parent scolds him. In this case, the other parent often acts in one of the following three ways: 1) joins in reprimanding the child; 2) blames his or her spouse for scolding the child too severely and provokes a quarrel; or 3) trapped between spouse and child, is at a loss as to what to do.

The question is whether or not this person correctly grasps the nature of the situation. This is where accurate cognition and evaluation become important. The child's negligence of his homework or his disobedience is a matter which concerns the child. Whether one parent scolds him mildly or harshly is a matter which concerns that parent. The other parent must clearly distinguish between these two matters. If he or she fails to do this and considers the two as being one, there is no choice but to fall into one of the three patterns of behavior described above. Instead it would be good to advise the child, saying, "Perhaps it was wrong to scold you so harshly, but that's his (or her) problem. It doesn't mean you are in the right. I'll speak to him (or her) about not being so harsh, but for your part, you must correct your behavior." A parent who can give such

advice is an excellent "bearing."

The same holds true with our organization. The vice chief has a vital part to play—that of creating and maintaining harmony between the chief and the members. For this reason, I hope that vice chiefs will always try to be superb co-players who act with the same awareness and responsibility as their chiefs and who endeavor to lead the organization wisely based on an overall viewpoint.

Moreover, if you support the chief as a good "bearing," you will in turn be well supported should you ever hold that position. This is the natural working of cause and effect.

### Support Each Other

IN order to maintain harmony within the organization, it is first of all important to support the person in a position of responsibility. To support him, however, does not mean always to be with him and do everything as he says.

To support the chief also means to support each and every member. As I said earlier, family harmony cannot be maintained if both parents join in berating their child, if one sides with the child against the other parent, or if one is trapped in between and doesn't know what to do. To apply this to our organization, you must neither join your chief in reprimanding the members, nor take their side in criticizing him.

Let's assume that you overhear one of your members criticizing your chapter chief. It will never do to reproach him, saying, "If you criticize a leader, you'll receive a negative effect." It is even worse if you agree with him and say, "I understand your resentment, because I feel exactly the same way. He's simply impossible to get along with." Nor is there any value in just worrying, trapped in between.

In this case, you can say to your member, "Our chapter chief may scold us too severely. He may not have much tolerance sometimes. That is his problem. But if you bear a grudge against him on account of it, that's your problem. Under no circumstances whatsoever should you entertain bad feelings against him or, for that matter, against any believer." Then redirect him to the task at hand and encourage him to tackle it. In carrying out our activities, it is as important to maintain harmony within the organization as it is to let each and every member give full play to his capability. Family members each have their respective parts to play in the family. Likewise, each member has a role of his own to perform within the organization. It is important to understand and complement each other's role.

### Never-retreating Faith

A STUDENT who is not permitted to advance to the next grade is said to have failed. A believer who does not progress in faith is called a backslider. The Gosho

says, "Strengthen your faith day by day and month after month. Should you slacken even a bit, demons will take advantage."\* If a member has been practicing for years but still remains at the same level of faith as when he started, he is, in a sense, going backward. If an infant sings a nursery rhyme, people will applaud him, saying, "Well done! How smart you are!" However, if he cannot do anything but sing that same nursery rhyme even after becoming an adult, people will consider him retarded and begin to worry about him. What deserves praise in infancy does not necessarily receive the same evaluation in adulthood. He may protest, saying, "You used to praise me for singing this song before. Then why do you disapprove of it now?" He is oblivious to the fact that as far as his musicality is concerned, he himself has not grown a bit.

The same holds true with faith. The longer a person's practice, the deeper his faith and the higher his state of life should be. The second president, Josei Toda, used to say, "Not advancing is the same as retreating." This is strict guidance, but a point we should always bear in mind. I hope all of you will strive to be true followers of the Mystic Law who maintain pure faith and a strong seeking spirit and who always rigorously challenge themselves.

\**Major Writings*, vol. I, pp. 241-42.

### The Only Reliable Support

ONCE a housewife came to me to seek advice. She complained that her husband was totally undependable. He had closed the *sushi* shop which he had run for many years. Since then, he had taken job after job, failing in each one.

This is in essence what I told her:

Men are not born to be leaned upon by women. Why are you trying to depend on your husband, who you just told me is totally undependable? Sometimes we cannot even rely upon ourselves; then how can we expect to rely upon others? Your husband would be enraged to hear this, but he is not someone to depend on.

Let's assume, for argument's sake, that your husband were a dependable person. What would happen if he fell ill or failed in his business? Worse still, what if he should die prematurely? You would have no one to rely on. The one and only reliable support in life is the Gohonzon. A husband is not someone to lean on but someone to relate to with love. So are children. You raise them because you love them and not because of any ulterior motive.

Some people, when they grow old, try to depend on their children. When their expectation is betrayed, they complain, "After all the hardships we went through to bring them up, they refuse to take care of us." They seem to have raised their children not because of love,

but out of self-interest—as a sort of old-age insurance. I do not think this is the correct attitude parents should take.

It is important that you chant to the Gohonzon that your husband will become an invaluable asset to the movement for *kōsen-rufu* and that your children will grow up to be fine adults. You should continue to do so until your prayers are answered. Those prayers will convey themselves to your husband and children, enrich their hearts and cause them to protect you. This is the true meaning of love.

The same principle applies to personal relationships within the organization of the Soka Gakkai. The chapter women's chief should not try to depend on the chapter chief. When the leaders and members of various divisions work together with the Gohonzon at the center of their activities, unity and harmony will arise naturally within their chapter. A man who lords it over everyone at home makes his family miserable and antagonistic to him. His wife and children will regard him with respect and love only when he shows concern for them and fulfills his responsibilities toward them, praying that all of them will be able to contribute to the movement for *kōsen-rufu*. The same holds true with a leader of our organization.

### Correct Bad Attitude

A LEADER giving individual guidance should not only address the immediate problem but devote heart and soul to helping that person establish a correct attitude in faith. Where two parties are concerned, he should be careful not to listen to only one of them and be swayed by what that person has to say. If you give guidance in favor of one party, you will in all probability incur the resentment of the other. That will make the problem even more complicated.

We encounter various problems in the course of our human revolution. However, a seed cannot sprout unless it is covered with dirt. Here the seed represents the internal cause and dirt is the external cause. Each of us has the seed of Buddhahood implanted within and, like the seed of a plant, it requires "dirt" in order to sprout. In Buddhism, this "dirt" is called *zenchishiki*, a good influence. It may take the form of disease, troubles with one's children and, in some cases, financial problems.

Here I'd like to talk about money troubles. A rich person worries about the money he lends; a poor person worries about the money he borrows. The important thing is whether or not these people can use their respective problems as a springboard for their human revolution. When money troubles occur between members, you must not approach such problems merely from the standpoint of who is to blame, the lender or the borrower. Instead you should give them proper guidance

in faith so that they can reflect upon their attitude. Say to the lender, "Because of your lack of confidence, you could not reject this person's request. So you lent him money. In Buddhism, that is called 'small mercy'—something which appears to be mercy but in actuality is not mercy at all." Remind the borrower, "You must learn to depend on the Gohonzon and not on someone else's wallet."

Moreover, from your own standpoint, you should regard this problem among your members as an opportunity to change some aspect of your own bad karma. Staying away from the organization will not make it go away. A similar problem would then eventually appear in some other aspect of your life. Rather you must earnestly chant daimoku in order to change "poison" into "medicine." Do not reproach the members, but give them considerate guidance in faith and then encourage them so that they will be able to develop their faith. Then you too can greatly develop and gain good fortune.

Sometimes money trouble may assume such serious proportions that it becomes necessary to remove the member concerned from his position. Even in such cases, you must bear in mind that this is in no way a punitive measure. Tell the individual concerned that this step is being taken in order to prevent disturbance within the organization, and thereby make it easier for him to stand up again. Give him compassionate guidance and encouragement so that he can reflect upon his faith, chant daimoku earnestly and eventually be able to resume his position.

Through many experiences, both those who give guidance and those who receive it will be able to strengthen their faith and make further growth.

### Avoid Slander

A PASSAGE in the *Kambotsu* (28th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra says that anyone who proclaims the faults and errors of those who believe in the Lotus Sutra, "whether what he speaks is true or false," will suffer loss. I heard this passage more than thirty years ago, soon after I took faith. After some time, however, I became conceited and argumentative, as many people do when their practice lapses into force of habit. I began to question the above-quoted passage. It is wrong, I agreed, to say that other believers did evil when in reality they did not. But if in fact they did, then why shouldn't we say so? The passage states, "whether true or false." That's absurd, I thought. Perhaps it was intended to protect believers of the Lotus Sutra, but isn't that showing prejudice?

I took my question to the first president of the Soka Gakkai, Mr. Makiguchi. Quoting from the Goshō, he said, "It all comes down to whether or not you have compassion. If you point out another member's errors out of a genuine desire to help him correct them, you are doing good. On the other hand, if you do so only to criticize or disparage him, then even if what you say is true, you are doing wrong." I was fully convinced.

There are two kinds of anger: constructive and destructive. If you scold your child because you want him to grow up to be a good person, that is constructive anger. On the other hand, if you get petulant and emotional and bawl him out because he refuses to obey you, that is destructive anger. The same holds true with the relationships between Soka Gakkai members. Under no circumstance must we ridicule or bear grudges against those who embrace the Gohonzon. In the final analysis, the question is what kind of feeling lies in the depths of our hearts. Let's advance together in perfect harmony, respecting one another.

### Trouble Can Nourish Growth

(To a leader who left the organization because of conflicts with other leaders)

THE only place that a lotus can bloom and grow thick, healthy roots is in the mud and slime of a lotus pond. If the lotus started to hate its dirty pond and snuck away to some school swimming pool, how could it ever bloom? What would happen to its roots? People may complain of all kinds of troubles in life, but it's only because of such difficulties that you can attain your human revolution. This is the principle of changing poison into medicine. If you clean the mud out of the pond and pave it with concrete, what'll happen to the lotus? It'll never bloom. The pond represents our problem-filled world, the lotus is you and the mud is your

problems—the indispensable nourishment for your human revolution, your own growth. No matter how muddy or dirty its pond is, the lotus can still bloom beautifully.

Therefore, in order to attain your human revolution, you have to stay in the pond and struggle to grow right in that mud. In other words, without all kinds of difficulties and problems in life, you can't really grow as a human being. The organization may do something you don't agree with, but that doesn't mean you have to get out. Your effort to overcome those difficulties makes you grow. But whatever you do to overcome them should be based on sincere daimoku to the Gohonzon. Otherwise, you will neither change your karma nor achieve any lasting success. In order to change your karma you have to bring forth strong vitality and establish an unshakable self amid this troubled, mundane world. With consistent efforts you can bring the beautiful flower of your human revolution to bloom.

You might still feel that your particular pond is so deep and dirty that you'll never be able to reach the surface. Maybe the seed of your human revolution is buried deeper than those of other people. However, the deeper and the dirtier the pond, the larger and the more beautiful the lotus flower when it blooms. Don't ever run away again. Instead, chant lots of daimoku to the Gohonzon. Apologize to the Gohonzon for having tried to escape from the pond, and pledge to become an individual who can really contribute to *kōsen-rufu*. Always remember the principle of the lotus flower.

## Merciful Consideration

(To a member who was born sickly)

FIRST of all, you must consider why you were born into this world with a weak constitution. The Gosho, quoting from the *Shinjikan* Sutra, states, "If you want to understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present."\* In light of the Buddhist law of causality which permeates the three existences of past, present and future, your infirmity is a manifestation of the bad karma you accumulated in your past existences.

Your trouble will not be fundamentally solved unless and until you change that karma. For instance, take a wooden pail that leaks. You patch it and the leaking stops for the time being. However, unless you put new hoops on the pail, it will quickly decay and fall apart. As the Gosho states, "If you try to treat someone's illness without knowing what the cause of the illness is, you will only make the person sicker than before."†

Each of us has the seed of Buddhahood within his life. Now, no seed, no matter how well-bred, will sprout unless it is covered with earth. There must likewise be "earth"—in other words, a good influence—in order for our seed of Buddhahood to sprout. "Earth" in your case is your delicate constitution. It is because of that problem that you seek Buddhism. It is your illness which

\*Gosho Zenshū, p. 231.

†Major Writings, vol. I, p. 193.

prompts you to chant daimoku. For you, your bad health works as what Buddhism calls a *zenchishiki*.

Changing one's karma for the better does not simply mean that a sick person is cured of his illness. It is not something like rubbing out a misspelled word with an eraser. You must show the actual proof of "poison" changed into "medicine." You must irrefutably prove to the world that you have attained a higher state of life than before.

The Gosho states, "Your husband's disease may well be the merciful consideration of the Buddha, for the *Jōmyō* and the Nirvana sutras expound that those who are ill can attain Buddhahood. Sickness awakens a seeking spirit."\* Use your illness as an impetus to strengthen your faith and arouse your passion to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime. Your sickness is "the Buddha's merciful consideration," because it is working to awaken you to the importance of reflecting upon your attitude in faith. The question is whether or not you will be able to take it as an "alarm clock" for your faith and correct anything about your practice which needs correcting.

Please devote yourself to gongyo, chanting and *shakubuku* so you will be able to manifest the Buddhahood which exists within you. Show to the world the actual proof of "poison" changed into "medicine" by bringing about a marvelous change in your karma.)

\*Gosho Zenshū, p. 1480.

## Purpose of Faith

THE purpose of faith is to become happy. Faith enables us to change every problem we face into a springboard for our growth, that is, to change poison into medicine, so that later we can say proudly, "Because of that trouble, we were able to attain our present happiness."

Some people say they have nothing to worry about. Actually they do; they are just not aware of it. There is no one in the world who is completely free from care. You ask a drunkard if there is anything that troubles him. He replies, "Not a thing." He is the happiest man on earth, but what about his wife and children?

Human life is always attended by various desires.

"I want my son to be a better child, a pupil who is strong in all subjects."

"I hope my husband will get a raise."

"My wife is so irascible. I want her to be kinder to me."

People are elated when their wishes come true. On the other hand, if their desires are not easily fulfilled, they begin to worry—about their children, spouses, money, and so on. Each of these worries is the result of a past cause manifesting itself in the present. Buddhism enables us to solve our problems by rectifying their fundamental causes. It gives us the power to have our wishes answered.

Some members quickly understand the guidance they receive. Others, even if they repeatedly hear the same

guidance, find it hard to comprehend. I'll explain where this difference originates. Some people try to solve their problems without resort to daimoku, and go to a leader to seek guidance only after they have been totally defeated in their attempt. In such cases, they often view getting guidance as just another technique or method for solving their problems. Since they grope for means other than the strategy of the Lotus Sutra, they do not easily understand what the leader tells them. On the other hand, those who have been earnestly chanting daimoku, relying on the Gohonzon in order to overcome their difficulties, readily grasp the guidance they are given. As you can see, the difference depends on whether you have chanted sufficient daimoku.

A schoolteacher delivers a lecture to his students, and then gives them a test. Some of them may score as high as ninety points, while others get only thirty. Now the teacher lectured to all of the students on the same subject for the same length of time. We can only conclude, then, that the responsibility for the differing examination results rests not with the speaker but with his listeners.

If anyone knows how to solve problems of karma without chanting daimoku to the Gohonzon, I would just as soon go to see him and receive guidance. In reality, however, I have never seen or heard of anyone who obtained such benefits without chanting daimoku.

In light of the causal law of life, it is because of bad karma that one is troubled by his children, parents, spouse, and so on.

At discussion meetings, a woman will often ask me

how to deal with her troublesome child. I give her guidance in great detail, and she finally understands. Another woman immediately raises her hand and says she is also worried about her children. "I've just given that other lady advice on that point," I remind her. "The guidance holds true for you as well." "She has only one child," retorts the woman, offended. "I have three."

The problems these two women face may slightly differ from each other, but they fall in the same area and therefore the same principle applies to both. I want all of you to become good listeners so you will be able to apply the guidance you hear to varying situations.

### Watch Warning Signs

SOME of you may think in frustration, "Members all over the world are receiving wonderful benefits from the Gohonzon. I read amazing experiences in the Soka Gakkai publications. Then why isn't my prayer answered?" Don't worry. If you rectify your attitude, benefits will begin to come your way.

Suppose you have an accident and escape with only a slight injury. You may say, rejoicing, "Because I practice Buddhism, I was able to avoid a disaster," and be contented with that fact. This is too easygoing an attitude in faith. Of course, it is only natural and proper to feel gratitude to the Gohonzon that you were protected. But there are times when you must take such a

mishap, though minor, as a warning from the Gohonzon to the effect that "You have the destiny to encounter accidents of this kind, so be careful. Strengthen your faith even more so you can change poison into medicine." A slight misfortune is often a precursor of a catastrophe. Take the Gohonzon's warning seriously, and reawaken your faith.

Imagine a child huddling in bed in the morning. His mother tells him several times to get up, but he still will not rise. Finally, she explodes. The child, still lying in bed, asks himself, "Why am I being scolded so harshly? Is it punishment, or is it because of my bad karma?" I think those questions can wait until after he gets up. It is also pointless for him to try somehow to evade his mother's scolding. All he has to do is get out of bed.

While not every illness or accident necessarily means that something is wrong with your faith, it is wise to use such occasions to reexamine your practice, improve or correct it where necessary, and further strengthen your faith.

Some time ago a woman came to see me for guidance about her husband's sickness. She said that when her husband had a chest X-ray taken, it showed a shadow indicating some cause for concern. He did not practice sincerely at the time, but because of this warning he started practicing more seriously. He reflected on and changed his attitude toward practice. Some time later when he again had a chest X-ray taken, there was no shadow at all, much to the doctor's surprise. I gave her guidance when she first came to me to

the effect that he should apologize to the Gohonzon for his lack of sincerity and that he should pledge to the Gohonzon to do his best to grow and contribute to *kōsen-rufu*.

The shadow in the X-ray was like an alarm clock which warns you when you are not sincere in faith. But once you are awakened, it ceases to ring and its existence becomes unnecessary. Nichiren Daishonin says in the Goshō that illness can be an opportunity to grow in faith. He states, "Your husband's disease may well be the merciful consideration of the Buddha. . . ." \* A mishap can be a warning which says, "There is something you need to understand. Strengthen your faith so you can find out what it is." At that time it is important for you to correct your attitude wherever necessary and resolve anew to develop your faith. So long as you keep your "eyes of faith" wide open, you will eventually be able to solve your problem, changing it into an impetus for your growth.

The fact that you have faith is no reason to be careless or take things for granted. If you have been assuming this easygoing attitude, then change it. Be strict with yourself, live your entire life wisely, and receive the great benefit of lessening your karmic retribution. Then, one day, you will be able to look back and say with gratitude, "That was truly an excruciating experience, but it is precisely because of that hardship that I became what I am today."

\*Goshō Zenshū, p. 1480.

## Everything Is Significant to Faith

WHEN you suffer a setback or mishap, regard it as a warning from the Gohonzon to reflect on your attitude toward faith. Otherwise, you may start complaining and soon get into bigger trouble. You might even wind up doubting your faith.

But if you take it as a strict warning from the Gohonzon, you can reflect on your attitude toward faith and thank the Gohonzon for the fact that the accident wasn't serious. Then you can apologize to the Gohonzon for any past insincerity and pledge to strengthen your determination for *kōsen-rufu*. This is how to avert more serious accidents that might happen in the future. When something bad happens to you, no matter how trifling it may be, if you think of it as significant to your faith, you can make it a cause for happiness. On the contrary, even though something serious happens to you, if you fail to think it significant to your faith, it will become a cause for unhappiness.

Therefore, check your attitude toward faith so that you can consider even a small incident as something valuable and significant. That's how you can change poison into medicine.

Visible benefits are not as great as invisible benefits. In Buddhism the intangible benefits are truly great. I'm not denying the value of conspicuous benefits, but it's important to understand this point. If you fail to do so, you may think you will always receive conspicuous ben-

efits, and if you don't, you may lose confidence in faith.

We can understand the concept of conspicuous and inconspicuous benefit in terms of absolute and relative happiness. To improve one's life materially and physically is to attain relative happiness. But relative happiness, no matter how great, has nothing to do with absolute happiness. That's why we are so often told not to be swayed by superficial things in our practice of true Buddhism. When you become rich, you might lose sight of that essential something in your faith and forget about your absolute happiness. No matter what happens to you, you should continue to chant to the Gohonzon. When you feel happy, you should thank the Gohonzon for your happiness. When you feel sad, you should pray to the Gohonzon so that you can replace the sadness with joy. In any event, it is the Gohonzon alone that you can depend on.

## Reflect upon Attitude

THE other day I heard of the experience of a women's division member whose son had run away from home more than ten years ago. This had been her greatest anxiety. Two years ago the son returned to the same prefecture in which his mother lived, but he would not come to her house. What came instead were dunning notes from the loan sharks to whom he was indebted. Day in and day out she was filled with complaint and hatred for her son, constantly blaming him and thinking,

"Because of that child I have to go through all this suffering."

One day she attended a guidance meeting. Hearing a leader talk, she realized that it was she herself who had the destiny to suffer on account of her child. There and then she profoundly regretted having borne a grudge against her son. The Gosho states, "Even a small offense will destine one to the evil paths if one does not repent of it. But even a great slander can be eradicated if one repents of it."\* Why did she have to suffer on account of her child? It was because of the negative causes she herself must have made in the past. Nevertheless she had placed the entire blame on her son. True, he might have been the immediate cause of her hardship, but the fundamental cause lay in her own karma and she had thus far been powerless to change it. All this she now completely understood.

From that day, she changed her entire attitude in faith. She chanted and chanted, apologizing to the Gohonzon for the slanders she must have committed in her past existence and for the grudge she had harbored against her child. Soon her son, after an absence of more than a decade, returned to live with her again. What's more, he took faith in Nichiren Shoshu. At a meeting of his district he publicly apologized and said, "I am truly sorry for all the trouble I've caused over these many years." Tears filled his eyes as he pledged to strive and develop himself.

A child will change for the better when his parent

\*Gosho Zenshū, p. 930.

corrects his or her attitude in faith. Take this deeply to heart, and you'll be able to change your bad karma. As long as you blame the other person, thinking, "If it weren't for him, I could be happy," then he never will change. Rather, gaze into your own life and destiny, and change your attitude first. Then, much to your surprise, a change will occur in the other person according to the principle of the inseparability of life and its environment.

### "Lessening One's Karmic Retribution"

WE are told that if we pray to the Gohonzon, all offenses are eradicated. Some members take this to mean that mere worship of the Gohonzon will make all the bad causes they committed in their past existences vanish immediately. Were that true, then one could change his karma for the better the moment he took faith in Nichiren Shoshu. This is impossible, for, as the Gosho says, "Buddhism is reason."\*

Let's assume that a thief is chanting daimoku to the Gohonzon, with the loot still in his pocket. Can he eradicate his crime? No way. He must first return the stolen goods to their owner and make reparation for the trouble he caused. In our case, by apologizing to the Gohonzon for our past slander and devoting ourselves to activities, we will be able to experience our negative

\*Ibid., p. 1169.

effects much more lightly. We will also be able to eradicate in this lifetime bad effects that might otherwise trouble us over many existences. This is the principle of "lessening one's karmic retribution." Remember that we are changing our destiny through our daily practice of gongyo and *shakubuku*.

In this connection, the Gosho states, "Bodhisattva Fukyō was not abused and vilified, stoned and beaten with staves without reason. He had probably slandered the True Law in the past. The phrase 'after expiating his sins' indicates that because Bodhisattva Fukyō met persecution, he could eradicate his sins from previous lifetimes."\*

You suffer in this life because of past karma. You might claim that you didn't create any bad karma or ever slander the Lotus Sutra. But actually, none of you can remember what you did in your past lives. The only way to know your past is to look at your present life. Your present life is totally the result of your past. When you suffer you should consider that it may come from the bad karma you created by acting against the True Law in the past. Then you must do the opposite—praise the Law and teach it to others by doing *shakubuku*. In order to remove your bad karma completely, you have to practice hard. Of course, one person's karma may be heavier than another's. But with the power of the Gohonzon anybody can overcome his karmic effects and change his destiny.

Sincerely chant to the Gohonzon with deep apology

\*Major Writings, vol. I, p. 17.

for any past slander you may have committed and pledge to devote yourself to the great cause of *kōsen-rufu* by sharing faith in the Gohonzon with others. This is the way to remove your bad karma. Prayer and practice are just like the two wheels of a cart. If either is missing, the cart won't go forward an inch. Even if you're doing activities without knowing why, you will still achieve your own human revolution. In other words, achieving human revolution means you are changing your bad karma. With this understanding, change each of your problems into a good influence, grapple squarely with your destiny, and advance valiantly and cheerfully along the path of your human revolution.

### Curing Illness

THE second president, Josei Toda, used to say, "There can be no guidance aimed specifically at curing sickness itself." By this he was succinctly pointing out the error we leaders are apt to commit. To cure an illness is the physician's role. Ours is to give guidance in faith. Some leaders engross themselves in discussing the treatment of disease, with little effort at providing advice from the standpoint of faith. This gives no fundamental solution to the member who came to seek guidance. This is true not only of illness but other specific problems as well.

The Gosho states, "If you try to treat someone's illness without knowing what the cause of the illness is,

you will only make the person sicker than before.”\* If you fail to discern the fundamental cause of the member's problem and give him only superficial advice, then, far from enabling him to solve his trouble, you will cause him more unhappiness than before.

There are numerous illnesses. Some can be cured by the exercise of moderation on the patient's part, and others by medical treatment. It is absurd to rely solely on faith and refuse to consult a doctor. It is equally foolish to depend only on physicians and not recognize the necessity of changing one's karma. When one's sickness is caused by the devilish workings of his own nature or by his karma, it is a problem originating in the depths of his life and cannot be cured by medicine. Whether one's sickness is caused by devilish functions or by his karma, he has no alternative but to strengthen his faith enough to overcome the cause and cure the sickness.

### Steady Course

IT is natural that even we who have faith should encounter various problems in the course of our lives. With the power of faith, however, we can solve all those troubles. One day we will be able to look back and think, “Because of that problem, I was able to grow, and a new road in life opened up for me.” Buddhism

\**Major Writings*, vol. I, p. 193.

calls this the benefit of “changing poison into medicine.”

I once heard a young medical student relate his experience. Before he began practicing Buddhism, his mother had been bedridden with rheumatism. His father was a physician, but he could not cure his wife's disease. On top of it the couple would engage in endless quarrels. How the youth resented the gloomy and depressing atmosphere of his family! This motivated him to take faith in Nichiren Shoshu. Then, one after another, the other members of his family followed suit. As a result, his mother recovered from her illness and his family became a bright and harmonious one.

The family was well-off. Had the father and mother been devoted to each other, and had the mother been healthy, the family would most likely not have taken faith in true Buddhism. It was because his parents fought like cats and dogs, and because his mother was ill, that the youth sought the Gohonzon and established his faith. Now, hearing this, some of you may decide, “Okay, we'll start quarreling with each other from today. That way our children will develop.” But this is missing the point.

Everyone has their own worries. I once heard an old woman remark, “I have the worst karma in the world.” “How do you know it's the worst?” I asked. “I don't know,” she replied. “I never thought about it.” I asked her if she knew how deep her neighbor's karma was. She said she didn't. In adversity everyone thinks that he or she is the unhappiest person on earth. However, it is true that the deeper the mud, the larger the lotus flowers

which bloom in it. Similarly, if one decides, "Okay, because this mud is so deep, I'm going to chant more daimoku than other people," then he can change poison into medicine.

I make it a rule to tell people to pray to the Gohonzon before they brood over their problems or complain. Some of you may be worried about your marriage partners not doing gongyo. But, no matter how many times you may complain, it will not make them embrace the Gohonzon. The Gosho teaches that benefits come from chanting daimoku. Nowhere does it say that you can obtain benefits by complaining, even if you do so a million times.

Fundamentally, everyone wants to be happy. The key to attaining happiness lies in whether we can overcome the negative influences of our environment or whether we will be defeated by them. We must build up a strong life force in order to win. Think of the wheat. The harder it is trodden under, the stouter the seedling that grows. This very process assures a rich harvest. The same holds true with human development.

No matter how well-bred a seed may be, as long as it is placed on a table it will not sprout, much less bear fruit. Only when it is buried in earth can it sprout. Each of us has the seed of happiness—in other words, the seed of Buddhahood—within. It is covered with the "earth" of various problems, which motivate us to chant daimoku to the Gohonzon. Then the seed will sprout. Thus the "earth" serves as a good influence.

Some of you may be worried because of your mates, children or parents. But so long as you merely com-

plain about them, you will not be able to solve your problem. Instead, resolve to turn your anxiety into an impetus for changing your karma, into a springboard for attaining enlightenment—in other words, into a good influence. Then muster your power of faith and practice, and chant and chant until you have solved your problem. Only your faith in the Gohonzon can enable you to do this. Without the Gohonzon, it is impossible to transform your problem into a good influence for changing your karma.

### The Right Direction

EVERYONE has some problem or other. Problems vary according to one's state of life. You need not ask other people what their troubles are. By knowing the nature of their desires, you can gauge the extent of their happiness or unhappiness.

Every living person has one desire or another, but desires vary in scale. Suppose a man cannot afford his next meal. This is an urgent problem. How he must wish he had money to buy something to eat! The more immediately a problem affects one, the more serious it seems.

The second president, Mr. Toda, used to say, "I want to help all unhappy people through Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. I want to prevent another atomic bomb from dropping on Japan." This was his greatest wish, and also the problem which troubled him most.

Which problem is greater in magnitude, Mr. Toda's worry or not being able to get supper? The former is, of course. Considered in this context, the larger one's worry, the greater his state of life. We could even say that one's trouble is the yardstick of his happiness.

Even Buddhas have problems. They want to make people happy, but because some common mortals will not take faith in the true teaching, they are worried. But the fact that they are worried does not mean that they are unhappy. I'm sure some of you used to think only of your own problems but now rack your brains to solve other people's troubles as well. This is proof that you have risen in your state of life and have become happier than before.

We feel happy when our wishes are fulfilled, and troubled if they are not. So the important thing is for us to possess the power to have our wishes realized. Everyone wants to enjoy happiness. So how should we go about achieving it? Parents remind their children, "You must not be lazy. What counts in life is diligence." What they say is correct, but do all diligent people become happy? There are many who work with all their might and end up heavily in debt.

Married people are another case in point. I don't think anyone purposely sought the worst person in the world and married him or her in order to become unhappy. Each of them must have married in the belief that he or she was choosing the best person on earth, and must have made great efforts to establish a happy marriage. Then do all families that strive for happiness attain it? Not exactly. Quite a few people lament, "This

is not what I intended my life to be." Parents do everything they can to help their children grow up to be fine adults, but some of them are betrayed in their expectation.

Diligence is, of course, vital. It is a must for attaining happiness. Imagine a person saying, "I want to make money, but I hate to get up in the morning. And since I get tired easily, I don't want to work hard." He will never become wealthy. However, diligence is not enough. There are invisible factors such as fortune and karma, which faith alone can alter.

When meetings are over, leaders may warn you about traffic accidents. Then can you avoid all accidents so long as you exercise caution? Not necessarily. Suppose you see a car coming from ahead. You ask yourself, "Is the driver drunk? Does he have a license? Is he dozing?" If you become overcautious and keep looking this way and that, that would be even more dangerous. While you are focusing all your attention ahead, another automobile may be approaching from behind.

I go abroad once in a while. Before I leave, my friends always tell me to be careful because my airplane may be hijacked or crash due to some malfunction. But what kind of precaution can I possibly take? If the plane goes down, I'll be forced to go down with it, no matter how desperately I may cling to my seat.

Of course, there are a number of unhappy occurrences which we can prevent so long as we are careful and diligent. Caution and effort, however, have their limits. In the course of life we sometimes come across problems which we cannot avoid even with the utmost caution

and effort. This is precisely why we must pray to the Gohonzon.

Suppose that you were involved in a traffic accident. The immediate cause may have been because it was late at night and you were hurrying home, because it was dark, or because it was raining. But, in the final analysis, it was because you had the karma to meet that accident. It is therefore vital to pray to the Gohonzon. This is what sets us apart from those who do not embrace the Gohonzon. Faith in the Gohonzon enables us to change our karma for the better and develop good fortune. It steers us in the direction of happiness.

### Behavior Is Important

PERHAPS you remember the time when anti-Japanese sentiment flared up in Southeast Asia and several Japanese firms were burned by mobs. When I visited that area later, I asked the local members what kind of firms had suffered destruction and what kind had not. I was told that it had had nothing to do with the line of business. At some firms, when the mob had been about to set a fire, the people living in the neighborhood restrained them, saying, "The Japanese working here have never hurt us." Those firms which had always maintained warm relations with the local people and had won their trust had been left unharmed.

This principle applies not only to Japanese firms abroad, but to our own daily lives. In our respective

communities, each of us is regarded as a representative of the Soka Gakkai. So long as we are disliked by our neighbors or are frowned upon by the people in our community for our behavior, it will be impossible to spread Buddhism widely in society.

We must become citizens with good common sense who are liked and trusted by people in our neighborhood, community and worksite. To contribute toward *kōsen-rufu* is not just to win new converts and engage in Gakkai activities. The question is whether or not our existence itself is an asset to *kōsen-rufu*.

Be extremely careful not to "disgrace the Lotus Sutra" through unreasonable words or actions, or through some trifling incident. Become excellent people so that everyone around you will say, "He is truly respectable. Everything about him is refreshing." At the same time, treasure your association with other people, and expand circles of friendship and trust in your community. Be convinced that *kōsen-rufu* lies in your daily actions.

### Faith as the Basis

I HAVE seen innumerable members renew their lives and show splendid proof of their human revolution, thanks to the Gohonzon's great power. Some of them, after having dedicated themselves to the cause of true Buddhism, passed away on the road to *kōsen-rufu*, leaving their friends feeling that their death cannot be too

much regretted. However, what pleases me and reassures me more than anything is the fact that their bereaved families have valiantly overcome their sorrow and are now vigorously advancing along the path to happiness.

Let me talk about one such family—two sisters and a brother who lost their parents some twenty years ago. Shortly before their mother breathed her last, she called her three children to her bedside and, by way of a last will, said to them, “No matter what difficulties you may meet in the future, you must never leave the Gohonzon.”

All of their relatives opposed the faith. None of them would come to the orphans’ aid. The three children had to undergo indescribable hardships, but they strictly abided by their mother’s wishes and continued to uphold their faith, always cooperating with one another. Now all three are active in the movement of *kōsen-rufu*. The eldest daughter is a mother of seven children, the second daughter a mother of three, and the son a father of two. Each has a happy and harmonious family. I can envision the smiling face of their deceased mother.

The Gosho states, “Because of the great benefit accruing from the revered Maudgalyayana’s belief in the Lotus Sutra, he not only became a Buddha himself but his parents also attained Buddhahood.”\* This passage refers specifically to Maudgalyayana, but the principle it contains applies to all of us. A child, determined to succeed his parents in the movement for *kōsen-rufu*, exerts himself in faith, practice and study. Then, not

\*Gosho Zenshū, p. 1430.

only will he himself attain Buddhahood but the blessings he obtains will also shower upon his ancestors as well as his descendants. He can lead anyone related to him to happiness.

What gives the greatest joy to a deceased member? It is for his child to carry out his mission for *kōsen-rufu* and to show actual proof that he has become happy. This is the greatest thing a child can do for his deceased parent.

### Divide Your Time Wisely

(To a woman who says she is too busy to do activities)

AS individuals are different, so are their destinies and circumstances. There are children who are sickly and require much care, and there are those who are healthy and easy to raise. Some husbands are understanding, and others are not.

You say you are busy participating in the affairs of your neighborhood association and practicing Japanese dance. Why are you doing all this? I’m sure it’s because you want to contribute even a little to society and also to improve yourself. Therefore you have no alternative but to pray to the Gohonzon so that each day you will be able to divide your time most effectively between Gakkai activities and other matters which concern you. This by no means implies that you should always give first priority to Gakkai activities, second to your dance and third to the neighborhood association. Circum-

stances differ from day to day. You must decide each day what to do first and what to do second, third and so on in order to complete all of them effectively.

Once, at a daytime meeting, a housewife sought my advice. Her husband violently opposed her faith. Before leaving for the meeting, she had told him that she was going to visit a friend. There was a chapter leaders' meeting scheduled for that evening, but she had not mentioned it to him out of fear of his reaction. She was a group women's chief. If she failed to appear, her chapter women's chief might be disappointed in her. On the other hand, if she attended the meeting, she would be home much later than she had said. Her husband would find out that she had been to a meeting and fly into a rage. "What should I do?" she asked. "Should I participate in the meeting, or should I go home straight from here so my husband won't say anything?"

This is one of those questions which leaders find themselves at a loss to answer. I replied this way: "What if I told you to go to the leaders' meeting because it is your duty as a group women's chief? Your body would be at the meeting, but your mind would not. All the while you would be thinking, 'My husband is probably home by now. He'll be furious when I come back. What excuse can I give?'"

"On the other hand, what if I said, 'Since you didn't mention the scheduled meeting to your husband, you should go straight back. Your family is more important. Don't worry about the meeting'? Physically you would be at home, but mentally you would be worrying about not fulfilling your chapter responsibilities.

"Whichever the case, your body would be in one place while your mind would be in another. Nor can you solve the problem by staying halfway between your home and the meeting site. So, you see, I cannot answer your question one way or the other.

"The important thing is for you to consider where your problem originates. It comes from your lack of courage—from your failure to mention the meeting to your husband. You only worry about immediate results without reflecting on your own weakness. You may say, 'I keep every activity a secret from my husband. If I told him, he'd make my life unbearable.' But that's not the correct attitude to take.

"Suppose you have an important meeting to attend. If you mention it to your husband, he'll be angry. So you slip out stealthily. Later he finds out and becomes terribly angry. Next time you make your exit even more furtively. When you return, he'll be even more furious than before. This is a vicious circle. It only widens the gap between you and your husband.

"The trouble is that you try to avoid looking at your karma and instead just make up some story so that you can sneak out. You practice Buddhism so that you can change your karma. Therefore, you should never try to avoid or gloss over the very real problems you face in life. Instead, bring forth your courage and attack your problems directly, by chanting fervently to the Gohonzon so that you can change that karma. At times you may think that that is the long way around, but it is actually the shortest and fastest way to change your whole life—steadily and surely, one step at a time.

"First, understand that you yourself must enhance your character through faith to the point where your husband will respect your religion and eventually embrace it himself. Then tell him honestly you have a meeting scheduled. If he gets violent about it, you needn't go. But don't use this as an excuse to neglect your practice. Rather, call to your mind the Gohonzon and the teaching that no prayer will go unanswered. Fervently pray to the Gohonzon so that your husband also will take faith. At the same time, be sure to fulfill your responsibilities in the relationship. Determine that you have no alternative but to chant daimoku in order to change your destiny for the better. In this way, you can eventually win your husband's understanding."

The same holds true with you. You see only superficial circumstances and fail to look at your own destiny. Remember that we practice our faith in order to bring about a fundamental change in our destiny. If you are to succeed, you must not try to evade the problem confronting you. Muster your courage, squarely grapple with your problem, and pray and pray to the Gohonzon until you succeed in solving it. It may seem to take a long time, but this way you are slowly but steadily advancing toward your change of destiny.

As long as you say you cannot engage in activities for this or that reason, you will be unable to make progress. You have a past-oriented attitude; that is, you are always stressing the way things have been up till now and not the way they should be. Now you are too busy to do Gakkai activities and handle all the other things you have to do. It is precisely for this reason that you should

devotedly chant daimoku, praying that you will be able to use your time most effectively and perform both Gakkai activities and other necessary affairs perfectly. That is what our faith is for, isn't it?

Sometimes members say, "My company is now in its busiest season. Stacks of bills are falling due. I've got to work till late every night. I'll start activities as soon as I have some spare time." They are like someone with an injured leg who, when urged to consult a doctor, replies, "I'll go see one when I'm able to walk again." Some people laugh when they hear this, but when it comes to their own affairs, they say, "I'll begin doing activities when I get out of my financial straits and have some time to spare." That's putting the cart before the horse. If someone doesn't have enough money and has no free time, it follows that he lacks both good fortune and sufficient vital life force. It is exactly for this reason that individuals in this situation must devote themselves to the practice of faith.

In your own case, always consider how you can carry out both Gakkai activities and other matters, and pray to the Gohonzon for the best solution. Then act wisely as each day and each situation demand.

## Work and Activities

WHEN told that they must reconcile work and Gakkai activities, some members think, "That means not to devote ourselves a hundred percent only to one or the

other. We only need to do both to a moderate degree. That is what Buddhism calls the Middle Way." This is a wrong interpretation.

Let me cite a group chief's experience as an example. He used to be a member of the young men's division. Having been appointed a group chief in the men's division, he began to engage in activities even more vigorously than before. He ran a small factory with about a dozen employees. In a few months he realized that his business was not going well.

Many people would have decided to stop activities altogether until the business was rehabilitated. (I recognize that there may be cases where this is the only alternative.) The group chief, however, went a step further. To be more specific, he resolved to exert himself all-out to rebuild his business and at the same time not to neglect activities even a bit. He earnestly chanted daimoku so that he would be able to do both in a most satisfactory manner.

What he did first was to divide his firm into two sections: production and business—functions for which he had previously held himself entirely responsible. He appointed one of the employees as head of production while he himself took charge of business. He also adopted a system of computing pay according to productivity, so that each employee began to perform his job with increased gusto. These new arrangements proved to be a great success. Not only did the firm's business begin flourishing again, but the group chief found even more time than before for activities.

Note that he did not choose between work and activi-

ties. Only when he resolved to carry out both successfully with an eye to the future did he see a new path open before him. To reconcile work and activities is not to perform both halfway, but to perform both to the fullest extent. For this purpose, consider carefully what you should do, and chant earnestly. Then wisdom will inevitably well up within you, showing you a splendid way out of your difficulty.

## The Purpose of Marriage

(To a member whose fiancé is not a Nichiren Shoshu believer)

THE most important thing for you now is to be clear in your own mind about why you are getting married. Many people marry in search of happiness and strive, each in his or her own way, to attain it. Then do they all become happy? Everyone knows that the answer is no. Why? To answer this question, we must first of all recognize the fundamental cause which prevents people from becoming happy. Otherwise we will be making the mistake of not seeing the forest for the trees.

A man and woman join hands in marriage not just for the sake of being married but because they want to be happy. From this standpoint, you should consider if you can make a valid decision only on the basis of whether or not the other party is a Nichiren Shoshu believer.

Some members marry non-members for the simple

reason that they cannot find anyone suitable among the believers. Sometimes, they later experience difficulty on this account. This is not to say, however, that you must necessarily choose your spouse from among the members. But some seniors say to their junior members, "Because that person is not a believer, he (or she) is not a suitable marriage partner"—and this without knowing anything about that person! Many youth division members also seem to be caught up in the simplistic idea that they must not marry anyone but a believer.

To say simply, "I won't marry anyone but a believer," is just a reverse way of saying, "I will marry anyone who is a believer." But is just any Nichiren Shoshu member a suitable marriage partner? Let's examine this question. Once a member of the young women's division came to me for advice. A man, who was not a member, had proposed to her. He himself had no intention of taking faith but wanted to marry her anyway. Each time he had asked her she rejected him for the simple reason that he was not a believer. Her suitor, however, would not give up. At her wits' end, she had come to seek my guidance.

"You won't marry him because he is not a member," I said to her. "Then would you take just any man for your husband as long as he chants to the Gohonzon?"

"No, of course not," she replied.

I pointed out to her the pitfalls in her way of thinking. "Suppose a man who is not a member proposes to a woman who believes in Nichiren Shoshu. She persists in rejecting his request because he is not a believer, so strongly that he finally consents to taking faith. Relieved

and overjoyed, she immediately decides to marry him. But wait just a moment! Such a suitor often turns out to be an untrustworthy person. He may have professed faith only as an expedient in order to marry her. He may only want her money, not her herself. Or he may be trying to get a good job through her family connections. There may possibly be some ulterior motive involved when a man decides to become a member under such circumstances.

"In a nutshell, the purpose of getting married is to be happy. It is relatively easy to marry but quite difficult to be married happily. Some people find happiness after marriage, others do not. There are a number of conditions which work to ensure a happy marriage. Faith is a fundamental one, but it doesn't exclude all the others. The ideal course for you to take is first to let this man practice Buddhism, if it seems at all possible. Then wait and see for a year or so. If you judge him to be trustworthy, feel a liking for him, and if your parents and seniors approve, then you may decide for yourself whether you should marry him. If you have taken all these steps, your marriage is far less likely to end in failure."

In this case, after receiving my guidance, the member of the young women's division met her suitor and said to him, "It would be easy to accept your proposal. But if we are not happy after our marriage, that will be against your interests as well as mine. Marriage is meaningless unless the couple can be happy. In order for us to be happily married, I hope you can see your way clear to take faith in Nichiren Shoshu. Then, when a year or more has passed, if I am convinced that you are

the right man for me, I will accept your proposal. But if I don't feel convinced, I won't. I would rather remain single than be unhappily married."

The man was impressed with the logic of her words, and sometime later became a believer of Nichiren Shoshu. He began to attend meetings of the young men's division and was eventually appointed a leader. All the people around the girl approved of the match, and she herself was quite willing to accept him as her husband. So they became husband and wife and are now happily married.

Some members take an easygoing view of marriage. They seem to believe that as long as they maintain their faith, they will meet somebody wonderful and automatically live happily ever after. This is hardly the case, however. Marriage is not always synonymous with happiness. Seniors must advise their junior members on this very point.

Generally speaking, a happy marriage does not depend on whether one gets married early or late in life. You must first be distinctly aware of the purpose of marriage. No matter how fervently you may wish to marry immediately, should your marriage fail, your wishes will have been in vain. You should instead pray to the Gohonzon for a happy marriage.

Young people are apt to rely on their immediate feelings in choosing a mate. It is only natural that, being young, they may sometimes feel uneasy about the future and vacillate as to what course they should take. Choosing a marriage partner in this insecure emotional condition often leads to an unhappy marriage. This is

where the advice of seniors becomes important.

Whenever someone seeks my guidance about marriage, I am reminded anew how many members there are who misinterpret the teaching, "No prayer will go unanswered." They must correct their erroneous thinking. Let me explain the reason why. Suppose you are attracted to a certain person and pray to the Gohonzon to be able to marry him. If he will truly make you happy, your wish will be fulfilled. If not, your prayer will go unanswered.

Prayers of this kind sometimes resemble the numerous demands a child makes of his mother according to the whim of the moment. The mother, after pondering the situation, either gives or refuses her child what he wants. The child may resent her briefly for not giving him what he demands, but it is her duty to give or refuse as she deems appropriate for her child's welfare. This is true parental love, isn't it? The ultimate objective of our faith in the Gohonzon is to become happy. Therefore, those wishes are not fulfilled which would eventually work against us.

### Ingredients of Happiness

ALL people want to become happy. Therefore they study or work, making tremendous efforts. If they didn't mind being unhappy, they wouldn't exert themselves. The question, then, is whether effort alone can enable one to achieve happiness. Not all people who devote

their full energy to their work succeed. Some of them end up incurring heavy debts. Others seek happiness in marriage and, after marrying, strive to make their relationships happy ones. But not all married people find happiness in marriage. Parents invariably do everything they can to raise their children to be excellent adults. Then do all children live up to their parents' expectation? Not always. Thus we can see that effort, while important, is not the only requisite for attaining happiness.

People generally want to live as long as possible. Therefore they watch their diet and take care of their health. Then is one guaranteed a long life free from illness as long as he eats properly and guards his health? No. In the early days of our organization, some members, when encouraged repeatedly by their leaders to attend discussion meetings, do gongyo and study Buddhist doctrines, stopped participating in activities altogether. They argued, saying, "I have to work, you know. You tell me to do this and do that, but it's not as if the Gohonzon feeds us. A man can't live unless he eats." Mr. Josei Toda used to ask such people, "Then will people live as long as they eat three square meals a day? I know of a man who dropped dead in the middle of a sumptuous dinner." Food is necessary to survive, but adequate food in and of itself doesn't necessarily guarantee a long life. Similarly we may exercise great caution but sometimes cannot avoid traffic accidents.

In order to be happy, we must naturally eat, take good care of our health, exert ourselves in whatever we do, and be always on guard against accidents. But this is

not enough. There are undeniably some areas beyond the reach of human power, things which cannot be avoided even with the greatest caution. This is precisely why we must pray to the Gohonzon sincerely. Hence the importance of our chanting and our activities of faith—not a self-centered and casual faith without reflection on the past or determination for the future, but a pure and strong faith which we maintain from day to day.

## Universal Peace

ALL people want to be happy. However, as long as they are dominated by egoism and think only of their own interests, they cannot obtain true happiness. It is egoism that causes individuals to quarrel and nations to war. Parents cannot feel at ease if kidnappers lurk nearby. No matter how wealthy one may be, he cannot enjoy peace of mind while the world is filled with swindlers, burglars and murderers. A country cannot be truly happy if it fears attack by its neighbor.

As far as collective happiness or world peace is concerned, people have sought after it for a long time, but to no avail. What is essential is first to purify the lives of people who are trapped in a web of egocentricity. When people who have purified their lives begin to emerge all over the world, it is certain that we can create world peace. Linguistic and national barriers are quite minor by comparison. To purify human life means to

put down one's egocentrism and think of others, as well as of oneself. Only then can we attain individual happiness, and guide others to do the same, thereby creating peace in the world.

Therefore, those people who have purified their lives to the point where they think not only of their own happiness but of others' as well are to be treasured above all. At the end of gongyo we pray for the Gohonzon's impartial benefits to spread throughout the world and bring peace and happiness to all mankind and the entire universe. In other words, we pray that all people will purify their lives so that they can enjoy happiness and that peace will prevail throughout the entire world. As long as there is no peace in the world, there can be no peace either in one's country or in one's home. Conversely, the peace of the world is based on the family revolution and human revolution carried out by each individual. Therefore the important thing is how many individuals are striving toward their human revolution.

Wherever I go in the world, I find many people who seek the Gohonzon. With my entire being I sense a worldwide desire for peace and happiness. What is vital at this time is not to view yourself as the center of the universe, but to consider the significance of the movement of *kōsen-rufu*, earnestly ponder what your individual mission is, and tackle it with all your might. I hope that each and every one of you will become a first-rate person in your respective fields of endeavor.

## The Problem of Divorce

FROM time to time you may be consulted by a member who wants to obtain a divorce. Some people make this decision in a responsible way, but many others blame their spouses for their incompatibility, complaining, "He (or she) doesn't understand me." As long as you merely try to arbitrate such grievances, there can be no solution. It is vital that the party concerned consider how to change his or her destiny—which has manifested itself as an unsuccessful marriage—for the better. This should be the point of your guidance.

Think of the Ikegami brothers who were the Daishonin's warrior disciples. Their father continued to oppose their faith for more than twenty years. However, the Daishonin pointed out to them that the father was in fact a *zenchishiki*, or a good influence, since it was his opposition that enabled the brothers to eradicate the slander they had committed against the True Law in their past existences. This *zenchishiki* principle can apply not only to the relationship of parent and child but also to that of husband and wife. Couples who are members have been united in marriage before the Gohonzon, amidst the congratulations of all those around them. Then why, in spite of this, must some of their marriages end in divorce? Those involved should think seriously about the fundamental reason for this.

Suppose someone is contemplating divorce. We leaders are apt to try every means possible to dissuade him

or her from doing so. This is wrong, for it is a matter solely for the parties concerned to decide. No one, not even leaders, should meddle in it. What we should do instead is to give guidance from the standpoint of faith. It is important to explain that getting divorced is not in itself a change of destiny. For those who blame their problems on their spouses, advise them to consider their mates as "good influences" and to strive to change poison into medicine. Why do a man and a woman, who originally chose each other out of all the more than 100 million people in Japan, have to separate? We must bear in mind that what such persons need most is guidance in faith which will help them change their karma to have such unhappy relationships. Moreover, the fact that one's marriage partner is in the wrong doesn't necessarily mean that oneself is in the right. We should also point this out in giving guidance.

Some members have already been divorced and feel deeply unhappy about it. Even so, if they can realize that the cause for that unhappiness lies within and consequently endeavor to strengthen their faith, they can definitely change this karma and enjoy happy relationships in the future.

### Loans between Members

I WOULD like to discuss the fundamental attitude we should take in dealing with troubles between members concerning money—trouble which usually involves a

number of complicated factors. Perhaps you have heard your leaders say that, in the Soka Gakkai, loans between members are strictly forbidden. Some members may argue, "What's wrong with borrowing money when I need it? The Gakkai says it's committed to helping suffering people. Then how can it make such callous restrictions?" In handling such difficulties, it is therefore first of all important to make the parties concerned understand why loans between members are prohibited in our organization. We must continue our guidance until they fully understand.

If some member is in financial straits and wants to borrow money, remind him of the power of the Gohonzon, and of the fact that with fervent practice, "no prayer will go unanswered." Point out the weakness in his faith of relying not on the Gohonzon but on other people's purses. If, on the other hand, you take pity on him and lend him money, you are showing "small mercy"—an act which seems to be merciful on the surface but is in fact the very opposite.

Someone who has money lends some to someone who has none. This, in worldly terms, is an everyday affair and poses no problem. From the standpoint of Buddhism, however, even if one borrows money to tide him over his present hardship, he has not yet necessarily overcome his karma of getting into financial trouble and incurring debts. He may well experience similar problems again and again. We must explain to him the basic cause which puts him in that situation—in other words, his bad karma—which he cannot improve unless he endeavors to do so on the basis of faith.

Suppose a member is in desperate need of money. If someone should lend it to him, he may feel so relieved that he will neglect to make further efforts in faith. Thus, from the standpoint of faith, lending him money is "small mercy," as I mentioned earlier. If, on the other hand, he can find no one to rescue him, he can more readily understand that he has no alternative but to solve his problem through faith. He will begin to chant earnestly to the Gohonzon, a course of action which will never fail to bring about a positive change in his problem.

Why does the Soka Gakkai discourage loans between members? It is because such transactions so often foment trouble within the organization. The one who borrows money does so with every intention of returning it within a few days. It frequently happens, however, that he cannot pay it back by the promised date. The lender may become angry at the breach of promise, and there will be hard feelings between the two. That is disrupting the unity of the Soka Gakkai, an organization which aims at establishing harmonious relationships among people. Under such circumstances, the parties concerned will find it difficult to practice their faith with untroubled minds. They may even harbor grudges against each other. Thus, both the borrower and the lender—the latter despite his initial goodwill—may eventually find their faith deteriorating. Nothing could be more regrettable than this. That is why the Soka Gakkai strictly forbids loans between members. Leaders should help members to understand this reasoning.

There is another point we leaders must bear in mind.

That is, we must not become involved in arbitrating members' troubles concerning money. Our role is to give advice from a Buddhist standpoint to the parties concerned so that they will be able to resolve the matter through faith.

I once gave guidance to a member of the men's division. He had loaned money to a leader who was in the construction business. This leader, however, had gone bankrupt and disappeared. The lender, enraged at this conduct so completely unworthy of a Gakkai leader, harbored a grudge against him and had all but stopped practicing.

"Did you know that the Soka Gakkai forbids loans between members?" I asked him.

"Yes, I did," he replied.

"Then, first of all, it's important that you reflect seriously about why you ignored that prohibition." I admonished him and then continued, "Perhaps you could not bring yourself to refuse when he asked for the loan, isn't that right?"

"That's right."

"Then it is your tendency to lack guts enough to refuse even when asked to do something which you know is wrong. Unless and until you overcome that weakness, you will continue to have the same bitter experience; you'll be taken in over and over again."

At this point, the man confided to me something he had not mentioned at the beginning. "To tell the truth," he said, "I extended a large loan to a non-member several months ago, and he defaulted, too. Strangely enough, I didn't find my faith shaken that time. This

time, however, although the loan was much smaller, I began to doubt the Gohonzon because the man who cheated me was a fellow member."

"I understand," I said. "Certainly this man is to be censured for taking advantage of faith for the sake of his own interests. But consider it this way: you loaned money not to a fellow member but to a building contractor. Then you will not be as discouraged as you are now. Also, from the standpoint of faith, your present trouble can be seen as a devilish function working to pull you away from the correct path of faith. Another cause is your lack of courage, which in turn indicates that you need to strengthen your faith. Instead of blaming the Soka Gakkai or some fellow member, why not reflect upon your own faith which proved to be vulnerable to a negative influence?"

The man's dejected expression now gave way to one of determination. "I'll make a fresh start," he promised me as he left. Later, when we happened to meet again, he exultantly reported, "Thanks to your advice, I have been able to change that poison into excellent medicine."

In such cases, rather than indulging in remorse for having borrowed or lent money, the parties concerned should first of all profoundly reflect on why they decided to do something which the Soka Gakkai so emphatically discourages. Then both should apologize to the Gohonzon. This will enable them to change poison into medicine.

## Attitude of Leaders

THOSE of you who have been appointed to new positions must realize that your first responsibility is to help your members grow in faith and attain lasting happiness. At the same time, you yourselves must strive to elevate your own life-condition. Always remember that leadership in our organization means taking responsibility for the members. On the other hand, those who were not appointed should give their full support to those who were and cooperate with them in every way possible. When you support and cooperate in developing your own organizations, you will naturally be able to accumulate good fortune and make the causes to receive protection and support when your turn comes to assume a central responsibility.

The mere fact that you have been appointed to a new position does not guarantee benefits from the Gohonzon. Unless you strive to fulfill the responsibility which accompanies that position, you will not enjoy benefits from the Gohonzon. When you do not work to fulfill your responsibility—that is, work as envoys of the Gohonzon for the members' happiness and their growth in faith—though you may have the title, you cannot really be called a leader in the true sense.

If you become self-centered and arrogant because you were appointed as leaders, you will simply confuse the members and cause trouble and disunity among them, and you will get the effects. That is, not only will you

fail to receive benefits from the Gohonzon, but you will compound and multiply your present difficulties. Miao-lo is quoted in the Gosho as saying, "The higher the teaching, the lower the person it can save."\* In the same spirit, the higher your position in the organization, the heavier the responsibility you must assume.

One thing which you have to always keep in mind is the "start from now" spirit. Take a Study Department examination. If you pass it and, in your elation, forget to make further efforts, you are demonstrating a past-oriented attitude, or the spirit of "now I've arrived." Those who think they "have arrived" will make no progress in their human revolution. On the contrary, if you understand that because you passed the exam, your responsibility actually becomes heavier and that you have to translate what you have learned into practice for the happiness of yourself and others, you can make progress in your human revolution. Now, even if you fail an exam, if you sincerely pray to the Gohonzon to succeed in the next one and reflect on why you failed, you will surely be able to pass in the future. This is the spirit of "start from now." On the other hand, if you feel discouraged and complain that you did not have sufficient time to study or that the questions did not come from the parts you studied, you are allowing yourself to be caught up in the past and feel that the situation is beyond your control. Whether you pass or fail, if you sincerely chant to the Gohonzon so that you can always carry on the "start from now" spirit, you

\*Gosho Zenshū, p. 340.

are sure to make progress in your human revolution and elevate your life-condition. I urge you to understand this principle and, as leaders, apply it to your new positions.

## Recognizing Devilish Functions

(To parents who are hesitating to take part in activities because their baby always cries during meetings)

IN one sense your practice of true Buddhism is a continual battle against the devil, that is, the negative forces in your lives. There are all kinds of workings that may hinder your practice and most of them are almost impossible to recognize. They will never come up to you and say, "Hello, I'm a devil and I'm going to give you a whole pile of trouble."

Have you ever heard of a con artist who looks shiftily and can't speak straightforwardly? They're always smooth and without a hint of deceit. They look so trustworthy and harmless by appearance that you might even tend to feel sorry for them. If they didn't, they couldn't deceive anyone. Even so, they are human beings. Everyone can see them perfectly well. Yet they still take people for their money and property. How much more difficult do you think it is to spot some devilish function opposing your faith when you can't even see it? It can sneak into your mind, so to speak, and hinder your faith before you know it. There's no kind of screen you can put up to keep such influences

away, so all you can do is sincerely pray to the Gohonzon to call up your own strong life force and use it to subdue the devilish workings within. If you don't, you'll be the loser—cheated out of your faith by your own darker nature.

You may have had this experience. When you're doing gongyo or chanting daimoku, your baby starts to cry and disturb you. Generally speaking, babies cry when they are hungry, tired, when something is hurting them or when their diapers need changing. But what if none of these is the reason? Then we have to look a little deeper. You might want to scold your baby and think that the baby is what is distracting you from your chanting. But in a deeper sense, in such instances, we can say that the devilish nature in your own life is working through the baby, trying to stop your practice. So no matter how much you scold the baby, you'll never solve your problem. You might be able to make the baby quiet for a while but it won't be a fundamental solution. Even if you spank your baby, you won't hurt "the devil" at all. Only your baby will feel pain and cry. In order to overcome such devilish workings, you have to strengthen and deepen your own faith. Constant, sincere prayer to the Gohonzon will lead you to the fundamental solution. If you understand me, then when something happens to disturb you again, you'll be able to recognize it as a devilish influence and overcome it with your faith.

## CHAPTER II

### Key Points of Individual Guidance

### Attitude in Faith

Don't think that, simply because you have faith, your problem will automatically solve itself in some way or other. Such an easygoing attitude will never do. It is precisely because you are suffering or confronted with difficulties that you must be all the more determined to strengthen your faith, chant repeatedly to the Gohonzon and devote yourself to activities for *kōsen-rufu*. This is taking the initiative in faith.

Some members worry that because of the demands of their work they can engage in activities only one day or so a week. This, however, does not mean that they will obtain only one-seventh of the benefit received by those who can attend activities every day. What is important is to resolve to create seven days' value in one day's activity.

What is a passive attitude? It is to convince yourself that you cannot do what you ought to because of this or that situation. In terms of Buddhist practice, it is a lack of determination to deepen one's faith in order to open a positive direction through difficulties.

To bewail having failed an examination, for example, is like crying over spilt milk. Instead, resolve that next time you will earnestly pray to the Gohonzon and do your best to succeed. This is the correct attitude in faith.

In terms of our daily practice, the correct attitude in faith means the determination to "start from now" and to "change poison into medicine." Consider the present moment not merely as an effect of the past but as a starting point toward the future.

The use of the conjunction "but" often negates the preceding statement. Even words of thanks are transformed into complaints by the use of the word "but." One's complaint is a manifestation of ingratitude. This is why complaints, where faith is concerned, are regarded as a form of slander.

For example, some members of the women's division say, "My husband approves of my practice now, but he himself doesn't chant yet." They have made considerable progress in that their husbands no longer oppose their faith, and they should appreciate it. However, the addition of "but" nullifies any gratitude they may feel. Appreciation for benefits received is one thing; prayer for further progress is another. Don't mix these two up. This is a trap into which members are apt to fall. As long as they remain unaware of it, they will be unable to pursue their faith with true joy.

The Gosho teaches that earnest chanting produces benefits. Nowhere does it say that complaining produces benefit, even if you complain about your predicament a million times.

No matter how many times you may repeat, "I'm busy," "I'm in trouble," or "I don't know what to do," you won't be able to find a way out. Instead, precisely

because you are in such a situation, resolve to devote yourself that much more to your practice of faith. This will certainly lead to your human revolution and to your family revolution, and also contribute to the movement for *kōsen-rufu*.

The water of a lotus pond is foul and muddy. The lotus blossoms, however, though they grow in the mud, are not soiled by it. This symbolizes the Buddha nature emerging from our lives. It is because of our problems (the mud) that we can chant to the Gohonzon and manifest our Buddha nature (the lotus flower). What if the lotus plants moved to a swimming pool because they hate mud? True, the water might be clean, but they wouldn't be able to spread their roots or to bear flowers. The same holds true with our faith. We must maintain our faith in the Gohonzon, unshaken no matter where we may be or what may occur. Let your faith blossom purely and beautifully, unsullied by the "mud" of external circumstances.

No matter what trouble you may face, take it as an opportunity to reflect upon your faith, and resolve to exert yourself all the more in your practice. Then fervently pray to the Gohonzon for the solution of your problem.

In a word, your strength of faith can be measured by whether or not you can overcome difficulties. The fundamental attitude in faith is to pursue your human revolution, using both your suffering and joy as motivations.

Some members seem to believe that those who have faith should never have accidents, fall ill or die. This is why they begin to entertain doubts when they see a fellow member experience misfortune. Now just think of the confusion it would cause in society if what they believe were true. For instance, Gakkai members would no longer need to stop for red lights because they would not get hurt even if hit by speeding cars.

Even a leader of our organization may be involved in a traffic accident if he dozes while driving. If such misfortune occurs, take it as a lesson for your own faith. Tell yourself, "Even a leader can have an accident. We cannot strengthen our faith too much."

It is only natural that we should chant daimoku when we are in trouble. Then do we need to chant only when we are confronted with difficulty? Of course not! The vital thing is to practice continuously from day to day.

Some members are not satisfied unless they insert the word "but" between "benefit" and "problem." For instance, they say, "Thanks to the Gohonzon, my health is improving, but I still have not yet completely recovered." This use of "but" is, so to speak, an expression of complaint.

I think we sometimes need to diagnose our own faith. Am I harboring a grudge against someone? Am I ruled by my environment? Do I practice only from force of habit? Do I recognize devils for what they are? These should be some of the items included on the check list.

When something positive happens, thank the Gohonzon. When you have a problem, pray to the Gohonzon for its solution. Resolve, as the Gosho teaches, to "regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no matter what happens."\* Whether or not that resolution is swayed by external influences—this is the measure of your faith.

We are now advancing along the great road to *kōsen-rufu*. We must never content ourselves with what we have achieved so far and stop progressing. To do so would be to concern ourselves only with results, neglecting to make further causes. In effect, not to advance is to regress.

We often say, "We owe our happiness to the Gohonzon." Simply to make this remark, however, is not truly offering our thanks to the Gohonzon. We must actually struggle for the cause of *kōsen-rufu* and respect each individual member. Should we fail to do so, the Daishonin would not be pleased, nor would we be repaying our debt of gratitude to him in the true sense of the word.

I have yet to meet a member who says, "I've come to you for advice because *I* am to blame." Criticizing or bearing grudges against fellow members stems from the attitude that "because of so-and-so, I am forced to have a hard time." Herein lies a major cause which prevents one from becoming happy.

\**Major Writings*, vol. I, p. 161.

## Practice

When a difficulty arises, don't assume a casual attitude, thinking, "Because I've been chanting daimoku, the problem will somehow solve itself." Instead, take the matter seriously, pray to the Gohonzon to change poison into medicine, and courageously challenge your problem. Your earnest prayer will bring forth abundant wisdom and vigorous energy from within, which in turn will enable you to find a way out of your situation, no matter how adverse it may be.

No matter what situation may confront you, don't allow yourself to become completely caught up in means and methods, but put into practice the teaching in the Gosho which states, "Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other."\* Establish an attitude of "daimoku first under any and all circumstances." Then, based on your daimoku, you can work out the best method. This is the prime point of faith, a posture centered on the Gohonzon.

Human beings are inclined to seek comfort and shun difficulties. Remember, however, that one can only train and improve himself through struggle and effort. Be a person of unswerving faith who chants persistently, no matter what may occur.

\**Major Writings*, vol. I, p. 246.

When something good happens, regard it as a benefit from the Gohonzon and chant daimoku in heartfelt appreciation. When something bad happens, recognize that the only way to change it fundamentally is through faith in the Gohonzon, and chant daimoku in earnest. If you maintain pure faith in this way for five years, ten years, twenty years and so on, upholding the attitude of "the Gohonzon first" and "daimoku first," your life will naturally follow a course along which all your desires will be fulfilled.

We are told that if we recognize devilish functions for what they are, we will not be defeated by them. To give an analogy, when you realize that what you thought was a ghost is actually a withered tree swaying in the wind, then you will not be frightened by it any longer.

Shakyamuni was harassed by Devadatta, and Nichiren Daishonin was persecuted by Hei no Saemon. They were not "devils," however. Regardless of the age, the devilish nature always lurks within life, trying to make believers abandon their faith, to foment ill feelings between them and disrupt their unity. Only our strong faith enables us to detect such "devils."

Consider everything which impedes our faith to be the working of these devilish tendencies. Pray to the Gohonzon with the inflexible resolution to conquer these devilish influences and change poison into medicine. Then no problem will remain unsolved.

The Gosho states, "Were it not for these [devils], there would be no way of knowing that this is the true teaching."\* "Devil" in Buddhism means the negativity inherent in life which acts to impede our practice by causing us various problems. The trouble is that we cannot see our devilish nature itself. It doesn't announce, "I am the devil," when it emerges. That is why it is necessary to pray to the Gohonzon so that we can recognize and defeat it.

When you resolve to struggle in earnest for the cause of *kōsen-rufu*, obstacles and devils will arise to prevent you from doing so. In many cases, you must battle the devil within before going out to struggle elsewhere. Bear this in mind so that you will always be able to make a fresh start in your faith.

The Gosho states, "... many evil forces are vanquished by a single great truth."† No matter how fierce the workings of one's devilish nature may be, they are no match for the Gohonzon. This clearly explains why we must pray to the Gohonzon.

In giving guidance in faith, we must be careful not to be blinded by the surface problem alone and get caught up in looking for techniques to solve it. The Gosho teaches, "Buddhism is like the body and society like the shadow. When the body is crooked, so is the shadow."‡

\*Major Writings, vol. I, p. 145.

†Ibid., p. 154.

‡Gosho Zenshū, p. 992.

Faith is the body, and the problem is the shadow. It is therefore important to urge those who seek guidance to correct their attitude in faith before anything.

In the course of giving guidance, you may learn something about a member which he or she does not want to be made public. Never be so careless as to divulge it to others. By making such thoughtless disclosures you betray the confidence placed in you and create distrust. Keep confidential matters strictly to yourself. It is only common sense that we respect other people's privacy.

Some members enjoy the high spirits generated by the atmosphere of meetings, but are weak when it comes to maintaining their personal practice. No matter how well one may understand the depth and greatness of Buddhism, if he fails to practice, his faith remains at the theoretical level. Always remember the teaching that faith is expressed through practice.

Some people say that they will not undertake anything until they have developed sufficient capability to do so. As long as they adhere to this notion, they won't be able to achieve anything. Take a person who has never swum in his life. As long as he refuses to jump into the water, saying that he will do so when he has learned how to swim, he will never be able to master the art. One learns how to swim by actually plunging into the water and desperately trying to float, aided by someone with abundant experience. Then, after repeated practice, he becomes a good swimmer.

The willingness to engage in activities does not emerge automatically simply because your leaders urge you. It wells forth when you are faced with a problem and resolve to tackle it with all your might. To illustrate, suppose you see a child fall into a pond. What will you do? It is only natural that you promptly dive into the water and save him. Certainly no sane adult would stand by idly without helping, thinking, "It's too chilly, I might catch cold. . . ." The same is true with faith. When you recognize faith as essential to your happiness, you will not hesitate to practice. First of all, fervently chant to the Gohonzon. Then you will realize how important it is to engage in activities, and you will find an irrepressible desire to do so welling forth.

Sometimes you may be too busy with your work to attend meetings as you would like to, but don't feel ashamed of yourself or give up activities entirely. Certainly you must have a few days off during the month, which you can spend doing activities. And even if you cannot attend a meeting, you can learn what happened there from those who participated. The question is not whether you have time, but whether you are truly willing.

Some members say, "I have no ability to convert other people." They should understand that this is precisely why they must pray to the Gohonzon—to develop that ability. If all the people to whom we introduce true Buddhism took faith instantly, *kōsen-rufu* would be achieved without effort. In actuality, however, our

movement is a long and arduous task. That is because it is not easy for many people to understand Buddhism. This is quite to be expected, however. Think of those parents who, estranged from their children, their own flesh and blood, are unable to communicate with them. Or of a husband and wife who were married while in the passion of love but who now find a gulf widening between them. If people so closely connected find it hard to communicate, it is only natural that we should have a hard time trying to make other people, who are not even related to us, understand Buddhism. Even if the person you are trying to convince will not easily accept the practice, do not complain. Complaining means that you are being defeated by your environment. The more difficult the task, the more *daimoku* you must chant. Then you can achieve the greater result.

The most valuable element of a discussion meeting is the contributions of the participants. It requires enormous courage to speak up before an audience. We must therefore appreciate their courage and treasure their remarks. The words uttered by one person often inspire all the others, motivating them to strive even further for their own happiness.

Contributing to *kōsen-rufu* means more than just engaging in *shakubuku* or carrying out other activities. You yourself must become a valuable asset to *kōsen-rufu*. In other words, strive to become indispensable in your chapter, your place of work and your family.

Perhaps you have heard the story known as "The Poor Woman's Lamp." A poor woman cut off her hair to buy oil for a lamp as an offering to the Buddha. Though she could afford only a small amount, her lamp continued to burn throughout the night, while all the lamps donated by wealthy people went out in the strong winds coming down from Mount Sumeru. Some of you may be too busy to do activities. Others may be in financial straits. However, no matter what your situation, it is vital that you resolve to find even a little time to struggle for *kōsen-rufu* in order to repay your debt of gratitude to the Gohonzon. Therein lies the cause for accumulating good fortune.

No matter what your struggle, you need strong life force in order to win. When your life force is strong, you can turn even the worst of problems into fuel for your own development. Think of wheat seedlings: the more often they are trodden under, the stouter they grow. Become individuals who are flexible yet strong.

The Gosho teaches that although the Buddha nature exists within the life of each individual, it cannot be perceived, much less revealed, unless one encounters a good influence. Without the proper influence, the seed of Buddhahood in one's life cannot sprout, let alone bear blossoms and fruit.

You must take a long-range view of life. If you lose sight of faith because of trifling matters or because you are swayed by the words and actions of people around

you, you are hurting no one but yourself. Maintain your faith throughout life so that in the end you will be able to look back and feel the utmost joy and satisfaction. That is the greatest benefit one can obtain from his practice of faith.

Some members say that their circumstances do not allow them to practice. They are like seeds which hate the dirt. Without the "influence" of earth and fertilizer, seeds cannot sprout and grow. In order to make our seed of Buddhahood sprout, we must utilize the environment unfavorable to our practice—in other words, our problems—as a springboard for our own growth.

### Relationships among Members

Both an organization and a family consist of people. Neither can improve unless each of its members strives to grow and elevate his state of life. To say you will start working on your own human revolution when society (or the organization, or your family) improves is putting the cart before the horse.

People who play a supporting role are vital if activities are to run smoothly. Vice chiefs at each level of our organization might be compared to bearings in an automobile. Imagine a car which has wheels and axles but no bearings. True, it can move, but it can never achieve great speed.

As far as our organization is concerned, "considerate" leaders can be classified into two types. One type are those who are good people in the worldly sense—those who readily lend money to members when asked or who willingly take the trouble to find them jobs. But this so-called "consideration" often deprives members of a chance to grow in their practice. The other type are those leaders who take good care of members from the standpoint of faith. If they see even the slightest indication that someone harbors a grudge against one of his fellow members, they immediately go talk with him until the problem is solved. If they find that some member is practicing his faith merely from force of habit, they go help him pull himself out of his lethargy. They take into consideration each individual member's situation down to the smallest detail and give him appropriate advice on the basis of faith. This latter type are truly considerate leaders.

Wherever there is an organization, there are problems to be solved. This is especially so on the front line of our activities. Remember that you have been appointed to your present position precisely in order to give guidance to members in trouble and help them solve their problems.

The greatest obstruction to your human revolution is any ill feelings you may have toward other members. Between senior and junior, there must not be even the slightest bit of hatred, contempt or jealousy. If you find in your heart anything remotely resembling such feel-

ings, recognize it as a devilish function and strive to elevate your life-condition. No matter how strenuously you may exert yourself in other respects, as long as you entertain such feelings, you won't be able to achieve your human revolution.

All members are equal before the Gohonzon. There should be no discrimination among them whatsoever because of differences in social status, income bracket or education.

We all devote ourselves to the movement of *kōsen-rufu* based on the Gohonzon. Some of us have many years of experience in faith, while others are relatively new, just as there may be brothers and sisters of various ages in a family. Let us pray that all members, seniors and juniors alike, can advance together toward the attainment of *kōsen-rufu*.

### Correct Viewpoint

Whenever you are at a standstill in your practice of faith, remind yourself of the ultimate reason why you are practicing Buddhism. Unless you have a clear idea of this purpose, you won't be able to undertake anything with enthusiasm.

When a timorous person sees a dead tree at night, he takes it for a ghost and is frightened out of his wits.

His fearfulness has made him err in discerning the true identity of what he saw. It is he himself who was petrified with terror, and it is his own timidity which caused that fear. Since he is both victim and assailant, it is no use suing the tree. Some members are easily swayed by their environments. This is because their faith is not strong enough for them to recognize devilish functions for what they are.

We need to look at the earth in terms of the universe, not the universe in terms of the earth. Similarly, we should view our immediate situation in terms of our fundamental purpose in life, and not the other way round. It is important always to bear in mind why we took faith in the Gohonzon and what our mission is.

The true benefits of faith do not become apparent right away. Even a person bent with age was once a baby. He didn't become old and gray overnight. Probably he saw no particular change in himself from one day to the next. As the years pass, however, a baby grows up and finally becomes an aged person. Similarly, the benefits of faith grow in a gradual way. As long as you continue to practice, you are accumulating great good fortune, even though you may not be able to recognize it from a short-range viewpoint.

As long as you think there is nothing you can do because the person you married is so stubborn, your spouse will not change. Take a tug of war for example. No matter how energetically you pull the rope, it won't budge

if your opponent is sufficiently strong. However, from your standpoint, the fact that the other party is so strong means that you are too weak. When you have gained sufficient power, however, you will be able to win. The way to gain that strength is not to fight with the other person but to pray to the Gohonzon earnestly that he or she will become someone who can contribute to *kōsen-rufu* as soon as possible.

Good medicine may give the patient momentary discomfort in that it tastes terrible, but later produces the benefit of curing his illness. This is a figurative example of taking a small loss in order to achieve a major gain. Whether one's life is fruitful or not depends on whether it is attended by small gains and great losses, or by small losses and great gains. You can correctly evaluate anything with this yardstick.

Some people complain that benefits just don't come their way. They rely only on their immediate perceptions to make this judgment, but our immediate perceptions are not all that reliable. The human eye is so designed that, even when wide open, it sees only small benefits and remains blind to the great ones. In faith it is important to have a spirit of appreciation. For example, suppose a member is hit by a bicycle on his way to work, but escapes with only a scratch. When he returns home in the evening, he profoundly thanks the Gohonzon. Yet if a day ends uneventfully, he mutters to himself, "What a dull day it's been!" never thinking that the very fact that he has not met any accident can in

itself be considered a very fortunate thing. When we maintain our gratitude to the Gohonzon, we can recognize benefit much more readily.

### One's Way of Living

Those people with no place to live in wish they owned their own homes. Those who are poor wish they had money. Those without offspring may wish they had children. They all think that once their wishes are fulfilled, they'll be happy. Happiness of this kind, however, is only relative. Happiness in the true sense of the word is absolute, a state of life in which you have sufficient life force to change any adverse circumstances whatsoever into causes for your own growth.

Everyone wants to be happy, but in reality one meets troubles and hardships. Often one blames other people or society for his difficulties. True, the immediate cause may lie in other people or society. But why is one person suffering from a particular problem and not someone else? Until one realizes that the fundamental cause of his trouble lies within himself, there can be no true solution.

Suppose someone makes an outstanding achievement in his profession. He is widely acclaimed for it and wins international fame. But does this mean that he has become truly happy? Not necessarily. Some celebrated

people feel unhappy, for precisely because of their fame they have less freedom of action than before or are unable to devote themselves to their families as they might wish. True happiness is not a matter of fame but of one's state of life.

You can judge the degree of someone's happiness by the nature of his desires. Someone with a lofty goal is a happy person.

Suppose you are a lotus plant. At first you may resent the filthy muck in which you find yourself. But later you will realize it was because of that muck that you could bud and bear beautiful blossoms. Likewise, when you begin to consider your adverse circumstances as good influences, you are on the road to your human revolution.

As long as members of a family, an organization or a community each act out of egoistic motives, there will be gulfs between them. Only when one purifies his life to the point where he desires not only his own happiness but also others' will a "spiritual Silk Road" be created. Soka Gakkai International President Ikeda, in a speech at Moscow State University on May 27, 1975, declared that there is a pressing need for a spiritual Silk Road connecting the minds and hearts of the peoples of the world. I think we also need a spiritual Silk Road on a smaller scale—one which connects us to our families, to our organization, and to our community.

Some members seem to believe that one who has faith should never get sick, have accidents or be robbed. They therefore begin to doubt their faith when some of their fellow members meet misfortune. They must realize that even those with faith are bound to encounter difficulties as long as they live in this world. Difficulties are like waves of the sea. Life is, as it were, a struggle against those waves. Will we be able to ride over them or will we be engulfed by them? This depends on the strength of our faith in the Gohonzon.

Buddhism teaches that both the past and the future are contained in the present moment. Each day, each moment, is precious, for our actions from moment to moment determine the course of our lives in that we are creating a new karma. Regard the present moment not only as the effect of the past but also as a cause for the future.

A person can suffer for any number of reasons—because of his or her children, parents, spouse, lack of money, sickness, bad human relations and so on. In light of the Buddhist law of causality, however, the cause for all such problems lies within that individual's own life, although they become manifest in relation to his circumstances.

No matter how much you may thank your parents verbally for their efforts in raising you, they won't be happy as long as you keep on bullying your brothers and sisters. They would rather see you taking good

care of the younger children than hear mere words of gratitude. Similarly, no matter how much you may praise the Gohonzon, if you and your members do not get along harmoniously with one another, the Gohonzon, so to speak, will not be happy.

Some members say that because their spouses oppose their faith, they cannot fully devote themselves to activities, and there is constant discord in their homes. Instead of complaining, they should regard their mates as good influences and determine to strengthen their faith. A positive attitude of this kind will enable the seed of Buddhahood within their own lives to sprout.

Suppose your spouse opposes your faith. You must realize that he or she does so from lack of understanding. Earnestly pray to the Gohonzon that he or she will come to understand true Buddhism and take faith in it. Then you will find sufficient wisdom welling up within you to know exactly what you should do beyond mere expedient means. It is also important for you to show actual proof of your human revolution—in other words, to demonstrate that you are definitely changing in a positive way because of your faith. Don't forget that it is *your* karma to be married to someone who does not understand your faith and practice. Also, remember that while it's okay to hate a person's acts of slander, you should not hate the person himself.

The Gosho teaches, "Buddhism is like the body and society like the shadow. When the body is crooked, so is

the shadow.”\* In terms of our daily practice, this passage means that we should make faith the basis of everything. For example, our faith is the body, and all of our problems are the shadow. It is vital, therefore, that we devote ourselves night and day to our practice of faith in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. As we straighten up the “body” of our faith, so to speak, all aspects of our lives will gradually change for the better. As we advance along the correct path of faith, strengthening our life force, we are step by step approaching a state of life which is filled with benefit.

### Changing Your Destiny

The Goshō states, “If you try to treat someone’s illness without knowing what the cause of the illness is, you will only make the person sicker than before.”† We must not give superficial advice to a member without recognizing and pointing out the fundamental cause of his problem. Otherwise, far from solving his trouble, we will cause him even more difficulty than before.

If a thief chants daimoku to the Gohonzon with the stolen goods still in his pocket, can he erase his crime? No, he cannot. He must return the stolen article to its owner and then make reparations. This is a familiar example used to explain the principle of erasing one’s

\**Goshō Zenshū*, p. 992.

†*Major Writings*, vol. I, p. 193.

negative karma. We must chant to the Gohonzon very hard and make great efforts for the sake of *kōsen-rufu* in order to eradicate our past slanders.

If all people who embraced the Gohonzon invariably got injured, then we could say that there was something wrong with the Gohonzon. But when you are the only one who met with a particular mishap, then, rather than blaming the Gohonzon, you must realize that the cause lies within yourself. Even if a thief takes faith, he still has to answer for the crimes he committed previously. Likewise, we must experience the effects of whatever bad causes we made before we began chanting. However, we can eradicate that bad karma after experiencing its effects far more lightly than we would if we did not practice to the Gohonzon.

A seed, no matter how well-bred, cannot sprout unless it is covered with earth. The same can be said of us human beings. Only when we are besieged by the “dirt” of difficulties and obstacles can we grow, using those problems as nourishment. When we are actually faced with hardships, however, we often lose courage and try to run away from them, or complain. It is precisely at such times that we must examine our faith, make a new determination, and chant earnestly. In this way we can not only overcome the problem but further develop our Buddha nature. Then, looking back, we will realize that we owe our present happiness to our past hardships, just as a seed owes its growth to the dirt.

From time to time I hear some member say, "I'm too busy to practice faith. I'll practice when I have some spare time." He is like a man who, when building a house, tries to erect the framework and shingle the roof before laying the foundation. Or, like someone with an injured leg who says, "I'll go see a doctor as soon as I can walk again." It is a typical example of putting the cart before the horse. Our foremost aim should be our own human revolution. We are busy, and we have problems. That is why we must pray to the Gohonzon, so that we will be able to make time to practice and thereby change any "poison" into "medicine."

You need not try to look perfect simply because you are a leader. To do so will retard your human revolution. Let your members see with their own eyes how you are actually challenging and struggling with your bad karma, trying with all your might to overcome it. This is the correct attitude a leader should take.

### CHAPTER III

## Guidance—Its Tradition and Spirit

## Living the Teachings of True Buddhism

NICHIREN Daishonin emphasizes the importance of the three types of actions—thoughts, words and deeds—in the practice of Buddhism. Strictly speaking, the Daishonin is the only person who read the Lotus Sutra in deed, in word and in mind. In our case, to carry out the three types of actions means to bar evil and do good in each action we take, each word we speak and each thought we think. This is a very important thing in our practice of Buddhism.

When we read a passage from the Gosho over and over and memorize it word by word, we feel as if we have read it in deed. Later, however, we discover that we understood it only in word and mind. No matter how deeply we may understand a principle, it remains a mere theory and therefore meaningless if we don't apply it to everyday life.

The second president, Josei Toda, used to say, "To understand a theory is one thing, and to put it into practice is quite another. You know that sugar is sweet, but your knowledge won't sweeten a cake which has no sugar in it. You also know that a hundred million yen is two times fifty million yen, ten times ten million yen, or a hundred times a million yen. Yet again, this knowledge alone won't buy anything at a department store. Knowing or understanding something is quite different from actually possessing it. Just because you understand the teaching that life is eternal, it doesn't

follow that you have made that teaching part of your life."

In most cases we mistakenly think that we have read some passage in deed when in fact we have done so only in word and mind. Let's review several well-known passages from the Gosho and see if we are reading them in deed.

"When the skies are clear, the ground is illuminated. Similarly, when one knows the Lotus Sutra, he understands the meaning of all worldly affairs."\* "Buddhism is like the body and society like the shadow. When the body is crooked, so is the shadow."† These passages are easy to understand, and we can explain what they mean when giving guidance. The question is whether we ourselves are living these teachings. More often than not we forget to straighten up "the body"—our own faith—and only try to unbend "the shadow."

"A passage from the *Rokuharamitsu* Sutra states that one should become the master of his mind rather than let his mind master him."‡ Far from being the master of our minds, we often find ourselves being controlled by our earthly desires. Soka Gakkai International President Ikeda once emphasized the necessity of changing our ways of thinking. He said: "Most people look at things from the standpoint of the world in which they live. But it is no longer time to stand on the earth and gaze at the sun. We have entered an age in which we need to observe our planet from the standpoint of the

\**Major Writings*, vol. I, p. 82.

†*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 992.

‡*Ibid.*, p. 1025.

sun. Now that the second phase of *kōsen-rufu* has commenced, we must earnestly ponder what our individual missions are and what we should do to accomplish them." Let's ask ourselves whether we are doing as he advised us.

"If you try to treat someone's illness without knowing what the cause of the illness is, you will only make the person sicker than before."\* The Gosho, "Curing Karmic Disease," states that there are six causes for illness, the sixth and most deeply rooted being the effects of evil karma. When we fall ill, however, we tend to consider only the immediate cause and influences and begin looking about frantically for some form of medical cure.

"If you propagate it [the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen*], devils will arise without fail. Were it not for these, there would be no way of knowing that this is the true teaching."† "'As practice progresses and understanding grows, the three obstacles and four devils emerge, vying with one another to interfere. . . .'"‡ When devils emerge, they do not announce that they are devils. Remember that they lodge themselves in the weak spots in our faith. Not to be swayed by devils means not to be defeated by them but to muster sufficient courage and wisdom to overcome them.

\**Major Writings*, vol. I, p. 193.

†*Ibid.*, p. 145.

‡*Ibid.*

### Propagation on a Person-to-Person Basis

AT the time I took faith, our organization was called the Soka Kyōiku Gakkai (Value-Creating Education Society). The name was hardly known to the public. Moreover, it was during the Second World War and Shintoism was being enforced as the state religion. We therefore had a hard time trying to propagate our faith. Even when we were doing *shakubuku*, we could not go very deeply into religious matters, so we could convert very few people.

Once, soon after my conversion, I suggested to the first president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi: "Our organization commits itself to 'creating value.' If so, we should conduct our campaign in a more 'value-creative' way. Why don't we do *shakubuku* by means of radio and large lecture meetings? That way, I'm sure more and more people will decide to join. As long as you continue to talk to people on a person-to-person basis alone, the goal of *kōsen-rufu* will take a long time to attain. I don't think that's of great value."

Mr. Makiguchi admonished me, saying, "Suppose we utilize radio and large lecture meetings to spread our faith. True, many people may be impressed, but how many will actually begin practicing? *Shakubuku* should always take the form of sincere personal dialogue."

I realized I had been looking for some method that would be easier and less trying than individual dialogue, and his response forced me to reexamine my thinking.

Mr. Makiguchi did not mean that we should never use the mass media for propagation; depending upon the times, it might be appropriate to do so. However, the basis of *shakubuku* should always be the heartfelt concern of one human being for another. This is something we should bear in mind.

### The Purpose of Guidance

THOROUGH and ongoing personal guidance is the tradition of the Soka Gakkai. Repeated guidance, overflowing with sincerity and conviction and pertinent to the given problem, can revitalize members' lives and enable them to become capable individuals. Mr. Toda always said, "The Soka Gakkai is an organization for providing guidance. The ultimate aim of guidance is to help the recipient bring forth vigorous life force from within and obtain the great benefits of the Gohonzon." He also used to say, "Guidance is another word for encouragement." It is one thing to say, "I understand," and quite another to resolve to practice in earnest. The purpose of guidance is not simply to make members understand. It is to make them determine to pray to the Gohonzon earnestly so that they will be able to challenge their problems on the basis of faith and at the same time accomplish their mission for *kōsen-rufu*.

On no occasion was Mr. Toda's guidance intended merely to give the recipient momentary comfort. He would always relate one experience after another and

devote himself heart and soul to explaining the immeasurable power of the Gohonzon which makes the impossible possible. This he did at every opportunity available—at discussion meetings, after lectures, during question-and-answer sessions at the Head Temple, Taiseki-ji, and so on.

Mr. Toda would always arrive at the place of a discussion meeting well before it began and give guidance individually to the few members who had already gathered. Members knew it. Eager to receive guidance directly from Mr. Toda and have themselves remembered by him, they joyfully came to the meetings he was scheduled to attend, bringing their friends and junior members with them. Leaders brought those members tormented by serious problems so that they might obtain his advice. Hearing Mr. Toda speak, they learned for themselves how to give guidance.

I was once scolded about an article in the *Seikyo Shimbun*. Although I was not the one who had written it, Mr. Toda berated me harshly, saying that I was responsible. I apologized to him over and over, although I didn't see why I should be held responsible. Naturally he did not accept my apology. Finally I thought that if he was that angry, maybe I'd better quit. But when I offered to resign, he became all the more infuriated. As I continued listening to him, I realized he was reproaching me not so much for the article itself but for my too easy-going attitude that "if it wasn't my personal mistake I'm not responsible" and "if I quit, my responsibility ends." Having finally understood, I said, "From now on, I'll exert myself with a deeper sense

of responsibility." Mr. Toda smiled and encouraged me warmly.

He would not tolerate vanity, self-conceit or arrogance, and gave severe guidance to those who had such tendencies. On the other hand, he was so considerate, even about the minutest things, that we were often filled with awe. To those who were having a hard time making ends meet, he extended a helping hand without their knowing it. No matter how strict the guidance he might give someone, he never failed to instruct one of the leaders present to go encourage him afterward so that the member would have someone to turn to and seek advice from.

Mr. Toda remembered everyone who had received his guidance even once. This goes to show how earnestly and sincerely he talked to individuals, treating each one as his equal, without any distinction whatsoever because of sex, age or social standing.

### Essentials of Individual Guidance

GUIDANCE should focus on matters of faith; it must not be concerned only with means and methods unrelated to faith. Also, we must safeguard the privacy of members seeking guidance. It is because they trust us that they confide to us things they would otherwise hold back. We must keep any such secret to ourselves and under no circumstance divulge it. Mr. Toda was very strict about this.

The Gosho, "Letter to Misawa," states, "With the appearance of this teaching, all the teachings advocated by the scholars and teachers of Buddhism during the Former and Middle Days of the Law will be like stars after sunrise or an awkward apprentice beside a skilled craftsman."\* When Mr. Toda gave guidance to those who clung to a low state of life, he did not deny their attachment. Instead, he tried to make them realize for themselves that their condition of life was low by indicating a higher one. For example, suppose your baby is playing with a broken toy. You worry that it may injure him, and tell him to throw it away, yet he clings to it even more tightly than before. Instead, if you buy him a new, finer plaything, he will discard the old one without being told. The same principle applies to individual guidance, Mr. Toda used to say. He did not tell members to rid themselves of their desires; he led them to awaken, of their own accord, to a higher level of faith so that they could transform such desires into causes for enlightenment.

Another thing we should bear in mind when giving individual guidance is that we must discern whether the recipient is truly seeking advice or merely complaining. If he is simply complaining and we fail to perceive it, our guidance may do him more harm than good. Mr. Toda was very sharp in recognizing the difference. Sometimes he would severely reprimand someone, saying, "It is your tendency to complain, which is the cause of all your unhappiness." He would remind that person

\*Gosho Zenshū, p. 1489.

of the need to strengthen his life force, which was now so weak that he was being defeated by his environment and could do nothing other than complain.

Suppose a woman comes to you and says, "My husband comes home drunk every night and goes to bed without doing gongyo. Please give him guidance." You take her remark at face value and comply. The husband is enraged that she divulged his weakness to a third party. Your guidance, far from helping, has instead provoked a domestic quarrel.

In such a case, Mr. Toda would say, "It is your destiny to have a hard time because of your husband. That, in terms of your life, is the reason why he drinks and you go through hardships. You are the one who is suffering, aren't you? Instead of complaining about him, you should try to change your own destiny which is the underlying cause of your unhappiness.

"Pray to the Gohonzon that he will begin to practice earnestly as soon as possible. You should pray that he will embrace the Gohonzon, not that he will stop drinking. It won't do you any good just to blame him and his liquor. The Buddhist way to look at it is that your own faith has so far not been strong enough to enable you to change your destiny. Hence his drinking and your hardships. Realize that the only way to improve the situation fundamentally is to pray that he will begin practicing. It is also important for you to chant lots of daimoku in apology for the fact that you have been blaming everything on him without assuming responsibility for your own karma."

### Treasure Each Individual

WE embrace the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws and exert ourselves in the three ways of faith, practice and study. For what purpose do we do this? Needless to say, on the individual level, it is to change our destiny for the better and attain enlightenment in this lifetime. Collectively, it is to propagate our faith, each to the best of his ability, in order to achieve *kōsen-rufu*, the task entrusted to us by the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin.

To accomplish these aims, we must establish, and continue to maintain, a correct attitude in faith. For this, it is vital that we practice exactly as the Daishonin teaches in the Gosho. For the Gosho is the very scripture the original Buddha left for us people in the Latter Day of the Law; every sentence and phrase was written out of his infinite mercy. That's why it is vital to read it and devote ourselves to applying it to our lives. By indelibly imprinting the passages of the Gosho on our minds we can deepen our faith. An earnest reading of the Gosho fills us with courage, conviction and hope, and impels us to strive harder in our practice.

It goes without saying that the spread of the Mystic Law in a family or a community begins with one person. The joy of faith shown by a single person embracing the Gohonzon, the actual proof of his change in destiny and the revitalization of his life, will never fail to spark a desire for Buddhism in the people around him. There-

fore, we who burn with a sense of mission for *kōsen-rufu* must treasure each and every member, conducting sincere dialogue and guidance so that all members without exception will be able to call forth strong faith. We must also renew, from day to day, our sense of gratitude for our good fortune to be able to study the Gosho and tell even a single sentence or phrase of it to others.

"The True Entity of Life" states, "Only I, Nichiren, at first chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, but then two, three and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others. Likewise, propagation will unfold this way in the future. Doesn't this signify 'emerging from the earth'? At the time of *kōsen-rufu*, the entire Japanese nation will chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, as surely as an arrow aimed at the earth cannot miss the target."\*

Exactly as the above passage says, we now find ourselves moving in a broad current toward *kōsen-rufu*, an achievement unprecedented in Buddhist history. This we owe entirely to the immeasurable mercy of the original Buddha. Now is the time for each of us to establish correct faith in the Gohonzon, develop our wisdom and capability, and show to the world the actual proof of the Gohonzon's benefit. For this purpose, it is becoming more and more important to inspire individuals by continuing one-to-one guidance, teaching passages of the Gosho and relating experiences.

Of all activities, the first president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, exerted his greatest energy in individual guidance. He gave considerate and detailed advice to whomever

\*Major Writings, vol. I, p. 93.

came to see him at his house in Mejiro, Tokyo. A discussion meeting of only a small number of people would consist mainly of Mr. Makiguchi giving guidance to individual participants. I remember one cold night in winter. A woman, who had come for his advice, was about to leave, carrying her child on her back. Mr. Makiguchi rose, fetched several sheets of newspaper and inserted them between the child's back and the *nenneko* (a short coat which covers both mother and child). "This will keep your baby warmer," he said.

Both the second president, Josei Toda, and the third president, Daisaku Ikeda, took the initiative in giving individual guidance with all their might. Steady, thorough guidance of individual members is the tradition of the Nichiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai, the activity to which the successive presidents have attached the greatest importance since the early days of the organization.

Speeches we hear at large meetings tend to leave only a vague impression and easily slip from memory. What remains in our minds throughout our lives is the guidance we receive personally from our seniors, words of encouragement we hear at a meeting of only a few people, or quotations from the Goshō which seem to penetrate and dispel all our agonies. Indeed, it is not too much to say that one-to-one guidance, filled with sincerity and confidence, has accumulated to form the solid foundation of the grand movement for *kōsen-rufu* which we see today.

It is clear from the Goshō that the fundamental spirit to "treasure each individual" is a guideline the

Daishonin taught through his own behavior. For instance, "Letter from Sado" says, "There is very little writing paper here in the province of Sado, and to write to you individually would take too long. However, if even one person fails to hear from me, it will cause resentment. Therefore, I want all sincere believers to meet and read this letter together for encouragement."\* For another example, "Reply to Toki" states, "I am deeply concerned about your wife's sickness. I feel as if I myself had fallen ill. Therefore, I keep telling the Buddhist gods day and night to cure her."† All activities for *kōsen-rufu* are in themselves the work we perform as emissaries of the Gohonzon. Let us pray fervently that, in carrying out these activities, we may be able to manifest even a fraction of the original Buddha's boundless mercy.

Naturally, treasuring each individual member is not something that should be accomplished at the cost of the unity and harmony of the whole. All members of a family or organization must respect each other's position, trust each other and form a life-to-life bond with one another so that each can give full play to his capability. It is necessary to build a harmonious family with the unity of *itai dōshin* (many in body, one in mind) and a vibrant organization with firm solidarity, in which each member has a unique and indispensable role to play. Both individual guidance and the treasuring of each individual member assume their true significance when considered in the context of the whole.

\**Major Writings*, vol. I, p. 42.

†*Goshō Zenshū*, p. 978.

### Point Out the Basic Cause

AS I said before, we must limit individual guidance to guidance in faith. The purpose of guidance to individual members is, in the final analysis, to encourage them from the standpoint of faith and let them resolve to practice with renewed determination. If we neglect matters of faith and only provide them with means and methods in a secular sense, it is no longer guidance in faith.

Let us assume that a member becomes ill. The doctor advises that he undergo surgery. The member, however, cannot decide for himself and comes to his leader for guidance. Now, whether or not to have surgery is something for the patient to decide after talking it over with his physician. We are in no position to advise him in this matter. The same holds true with other troubles members face in their everyday lives. They agonize over those problems, try every means available to solve them, and finally, at their wits' end, come for guidance. Merely teaching them methodology will not do them any good.

The Goshō does not provide any specific instructions as to how to cure illness or overcome poverty. Instead, it makes us realize that the fundamental cause of all our sufferings lies within our own destiny, and teaches us to strengthen our faith in order to change our destiny for the better. Suppose you are troubled over your child's illness. You fervently pray for him to recover as soon as possible. This is understandable enough, but you should first of all realize that it is your destiny to have

a hard time because of a sick child. Whenever parents with ailing children came to Mr. Toda, he would say, "You have the karma to experience difficulties because of your child. That's why he has fallen ill. You have no other alternative but to change your own destiny." This of course applies not only to children but to anyone in your family—your spouse, brother or sister, or parent.

As I explained above, it is important for a member who is distressed over a sick relative to make his agony a motivation for changing his destiny. It is equally vital for the patient himself to transform his illness into an impetus to spur on his faith. The Daishonin teaches, "Your husband's disease seems to be the merciful consideration of the Buddha, for the *Jōmyō* and Nirvana sutras expound that those who are ill can attain Buddhahood. Illness awakens a great seeking spirit."\*

As the above passage indicates, we usually do not become aware of our bad karma, the effect of our past negative causes, until we actually suffer from sickness or other problems. If we fall ill, we must tell ourselves, "This disease is the merciful consideration of the Gohonzon, intended to awaken me to faith. Now is the time for me to muster strong faith. Now is the chance to change my destiny." When we are so determined, we will find ourselves in a higher and broader state of life. The above Goshō passage teaches an important principle applicable not only to the pains of illness but to all other troubles we undergo in life. Our individual guidance is

\*Goshō Zenshū, p. 1480.

aimed at convincing each suffering member of this principle and encouraging him to solve his problem on the basis of faith.

The term "Buddhist apology" (*sange* in Japanese) is often mentioned in connection with the changing of karma and the eradication of slander. It does not indicate a casual attitude, the shallow idea that all you need to do is to regret your past actions and ask the Gohonzon to forgive you. We must naturally pay the karmic debt we have accumulated since the remotest past, though, of course, we experience the retribution of our bad karma much more lightly owing to our faith.

The Daishonin teaches, "These people seemed to have repented, but apparently they had not repented profoundly enough."\* In concrete terms, "profound apology" means to maintain strong faith. But when we face difficulties, we tend to forget about "profound apology" and instead blame others for our hardship. When we think about it, however, it is a reality of life that not everything goes as we wish. You will achieve nothing by harboring a grudge against other people, thinking that you have a hard time because of this or that person. What is important is a positive attitude to consider such people to be good influences for further strengthening your faith. The purpose of individual guidance is to make the recipient deeply aware of the necessity of that active posture so that he will begin striving for his human revolution based on the Mystic Law. Regarding the great blessing of the Gohonzon, the Gosho, "The

\*Gosho Zenshū, p. 1523.

Lotus Sutra Reveals the Buddha's Enlightenment," states, "The Lotus Sutra is the Buddha's teaching, the embodiment of his wisdom. If you profoundly believe in even a single character or dot of it, you will become a Buddha without changing your present form. This is just as white paper, when dipped in ink, becomes black, or as black lacquer, when mixed with white pigment, turns white."\*

### Pray for Members' Growth

I HAVE explained several fundamentals we must bear in mind when giving individual guidance. In addition, you must of course have good common sense so that people will feel sufficiently reassured to confide in you. On this point the Daishonin teaches, "Even though a person acts wisely throughout his life, one careless word can ruin him,"† "To make a vow means never to break it,"‡ "... you must not neglect propriety even to friends who come to see you ten or twenty times a day,"§ and so on.

If we are to give pertinent guidance, we must listen to the other party carefully with an open mind, and correctly grasp his present situation, emotional state and attitude in faith. Only then will the recipient be able

\*Ibid., p. 1437.

†Ibid., p. 1085.

‡Ibid., p. 1512.

§Ibid., p. 1527.

to recognize the defects in his practice, reflect on them and resolve to start anew. For their part, those in a position to give guidance must constantly concern themselves about their fellow members' growth in faith. They must chant earnestly, determined to perform this noble work with all their might.

It is wrong to think that you are not yet qualified to give guidance because your knowledge of Buddhism is still quite limited and you yourself are beset with problems. The Gosho states, "Teach others to the best of your ability, even if only a single sentence or phrase."\* To teach a member in trouble even a single passage from the Gosho is a form of guidance. To take him to your senior for advice is another form. To show him how strenuously you yourself are challenging your destiny—this is still another. Mr. Ikeda once said, "Individual guidance requires ten times more effort than collective guidance." Guidance to each individual member is a vital groundwork, an endeavor to awaken him to stronger faith by relating experiences and quoting relevant passages of the Gosho. Let us reconfirm its crucial importance.

\**Major Writings*, vol. I, p. 95.